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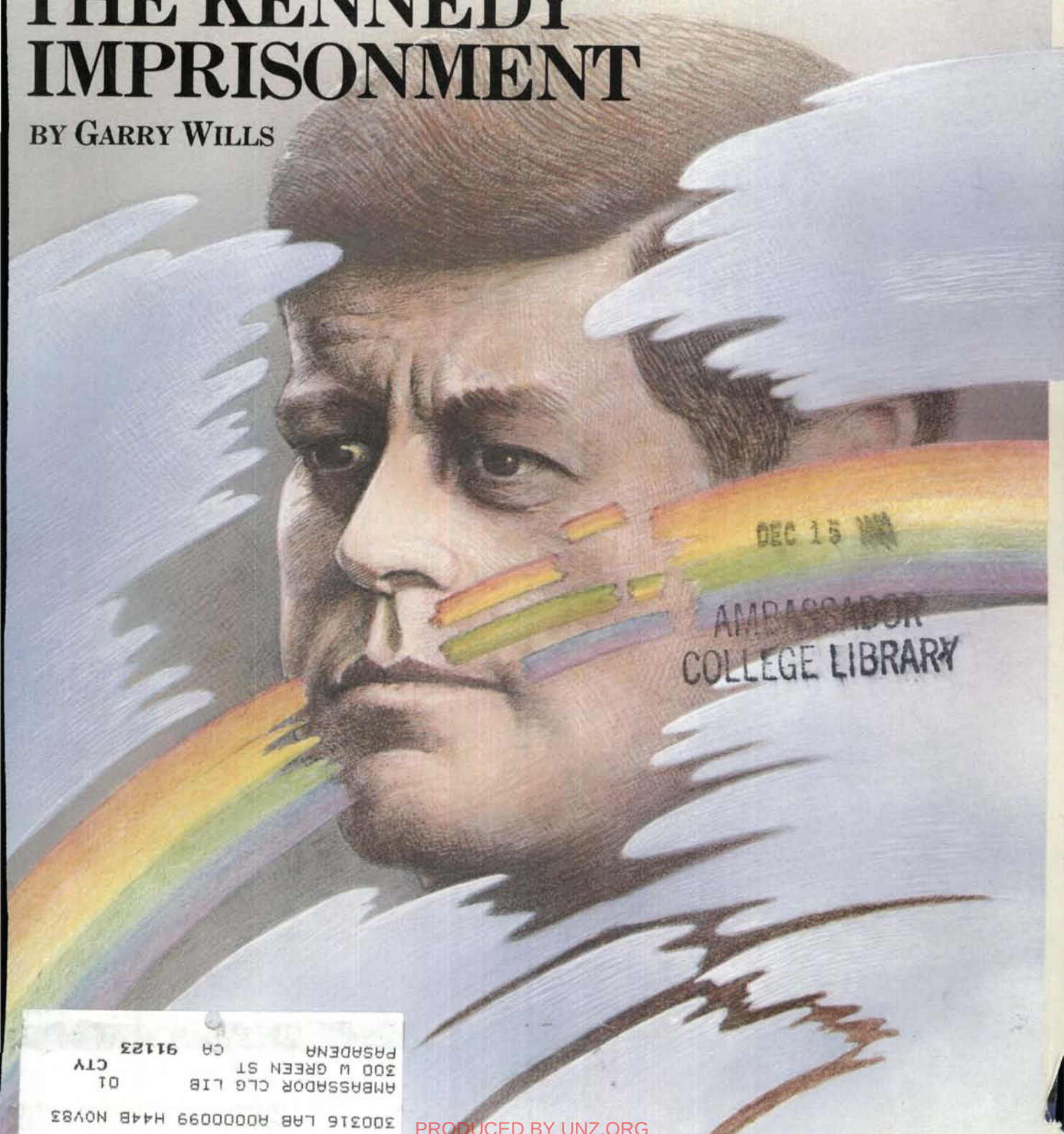
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THE Atlantic

JAMES FALLOWS / ANN BEATTIE / T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE / DAVID LEVINE / SUSAN QUINN

THE KENNEDY IMPRISONMENT

BY GARRY WILLS



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Urban Ideas from Abroad

With their budgets pinched, local communities across the country are straining to provide public services and solve urban problems. More and more, they're picking up pointers from abroad. They are adopting and adapting ideas and innovations from other lands.

Take such humdrum hardware as manhole covers, those clunky, clanging iron discs that dot city streets. Sweden developed adjustable manhole covers that can be raised or lowered four inches. They're now in use in U.S. cities. Adjustability means the covers can be kept flush with the pavement as new surfacing is added or settling takes place.

Movable swimming pool floors have come across the Atlantic from West Germany to find their way to at least 10 U.S. cities. At the push of a button, hydraulic rams raise the floor to create a pool for the handicapped or for tots, or to form a recreational floor for table games and exercise.

A municipal parking lot in Dayton, Ohio, blooms with grass, in a novel wrinkle imported from European cities. The experimental lot is paved with perforated building blocks. Grass grows out the openings. Besides being more attractive than blacktop, the lot absorbs water runoff and helps cool the downtown in summer.

From Finland comes a safety device for bicycle riders that's been adopted in Charlottesville, Virginia. It's a simple enough gimcrack: a 20-inch shaft extending out horizontally from the bike's left-hand side. At the tip is a reflector. Cars give a broad berth to bikes equipped with the safety spacer.

These ideas and hundreds more are being spread around North America by a non-profit outfit in Washington known as

the Council for International Urban Liaison. It's backed by such organizations as the National League of Cities, U.S. Conference of Mayors, and National Association of Counties. Through its newsletters, public officials are peppered with all sorts of notions, gleaned from abroad, to cut costs and make cities more livable.

In France, school buses carry regular riders when the drivers have finished their school runs. London police deploy a portable crane that lifts an illegally parked or disabled car and clears a parking spot in less than three minutes, even from a row of tightly parked vehicles.

In Japan, local governments are readying a system to read electric, gas, and water meters electronically. The Israeli city of Tel Aviv sells parking coupons to motorists. A parker tears off a coupon, punches special tabs to indicate the date and arrival time, and leaves the coupon in the car window.

Municipal officials welcome the flow of urban know-how from other countries, because they're generally super-sensitive about going abroad on fact-finding trips for fear of being cudged by taxpayers as "junketeers." Still, the council does sponsor trips overseas for officials willing to take the heat from taxpayers. Indianapolis, Alexandria, and Pittsburgh are developing waterfront districts with amenities and features found on a council-sponsored tour of European cities.

Other countries have hundreds of years more experience in urban living than we have in America. It stands to reason that our municipal officeholders and planners can learn a lot from their counterparts abroad. And they are, thanks to an organization spearheading the transfer of urban innovation.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

READING CHILDREN

A word from the trenches about "Why Children Don't Like to Read" by Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Zelan (November *Atlantic*). Over the years that I've been teaching remedial reading I've observed that even when reading material is above the frustration level, if it is intrinsically interesting, children will comprehend as well as enjoy it.

Most of today's primers are pallid and contrived, I heartily concur. Reading for meaning is the goal all teachers strive for. Most teachers I've known enrich and extend their students' reading material as a matter of course, both within and outside of the prescribed program.

ALICE M. STENGREN

Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

Children don't like to read because no one is teaching them how. Teachers and educators are expending too much energy attempting to discover "why children don't like to read."

We do not need new reading books, more reading teachers, or classroom teachers who are exciting and interesting. All we need is classroom teachers who spend two or three hours a day for the first four years the children are in school using any reading books available, supervising and teaching silent and oral reading. There should be fewer trips to the post office, fewer international dinners, fewer breaks for speech, remedial reading, physical education, art, music, etc. Our children are not hyperactive, our classrooms are.

ANNETTE LINDELL

Oneonta, N.Y.

The authors are unable to understand why educators have not rebelled over damaging methods of teaching reading in our schools. Perhaps the root of the problem is not in the teaching of reading but in the teaching of teachers how to teach reading.

I sat in a graduate-level reading diagnostic class, listening to a practically inaudible tape of a fourth-grade student. He was reading from three reading tests. We "diagnosed" the reading skills of this student at the pre-primer, prim-

er, and first-grade levels. The young reader "failed" miserably the first two reading tests, about airplane rides and workcars (whatever they are). He made significant improvement on his final test, about spiders.

The professor asked our class what level of reader we would assign this student to, based on our findings. Most of the class agreed that a primer reader would be appropriate. I was incensed that educators were basing a child's reading future on three silly and witless tests. My response was to make sure he doesn't get into a class with a teacher who doesn't like spiders!

DAVID HARBSTER

Flagstaff, Ariz.

My wife and I worked at a school for the emotionally disturbed in Wisconsin and found that the child who could not—or would not—learn in a structured classroom somehow improved his ability and desire to read if we allowed him to choose his own reading.

JOSEPH LANDO

Milwaukee, Wis.

LITERARY ANALOGUE

I thought Raymond Carver's story "Cathedral" (September *Atlantic*) very fine, both in its imaginative concepts and detail and in its sensitivity. However, while I read it I couldn't help thinking of another short story, one I often use in my freshman literature class: "The Blind Man," written by D.H. Lawrence in 1918. In Lawrence's story the blind man is the husband, and the strange, threatening man who visits is the wife's old friend. Otherwise, the similarities of plot and theme are striking. Both blind men feel the need to caress the face of one they wish to know. Mr. Carver's story is obviously more contemporized, but I wonder if he was aware of the Lawrence analogue.

JOHN C. HAMPSEY

Cambridge, Mass.

Raymond Carver replies:

I hadn't read Lawrence's short story when I wrote my story. After "Cathedral,"

dral" appeared, a friend asked me if I had read "The Blind Man." I said I hadn't. He hadn't either, as it turned out, but he knew a story by Lawrence with that title existed. I've since read "The Blind Man," along with all the rest of Lawrence's stories. It's pretty good, better than many of his stories. But aside from the fact that my story is more "contemporized," I don't see many similarities.

APPRECIATING D. H. LAWRENCE

As director of last year's D.H. Lawrence Festival, I accept many of the criticisms by James Wolcott ("The D.H. Lawrence All-Star Jamboree," November *Atlantic*). Nevertheless, to some extent, Mr. Wolcott is being unfair.

The Lawrence Festival as Tony Church and I originally conceived it was a much more modest affair than that which actually took place. It did not contain a purely academic conference for the simple reason that one had been held at the University of Northern Illinois a year earlier. We were astonished that so many writers, scholars, and actors wanted to take part in spite of being paid little more than expenses. As a result we had to move several of the festival events from Taos to Santa Fe, there being no adequate auditorium in Taos. This transfer was regrettable but unavoidable.

I accept the criticism that many of those participating in the conference made negligible or valueless contributions. I do not think, however, that Mr. Wolcott's comments on the celebration at the Lawrence Ranch and the Lawrence Recital at the Paolo Soleri Theater are justified. The celebration at the ranch was left to the people of Taos, who, resentful of the move of the main festival events to Santa Fe, wanted to do their own thing in their own way. I think that it turned out to be wacky rather than tacky, rather quaint in a Dionysian way, very comic and very odd.

I share Mr. Wolcott's dismay that the festival at its conclusion switched from being a celebration of Lawrence to being a celebration of Elizabeth Taylor. That was not Elizabeth Taylor's fault. If the press continues to treat her as if she were Prince Charles or Lady Di, or both, that is inevitable.

ANTHONY BRANCH
La Jolla, Cal.

I thought the Lawrence Festival, 1980, had long since been laid to rest, but perhaps we need to be reminded once more of its faults, most of which are the same ones usually found at any literary gathering—spiteful backbiting, egotistic fulminations, and the like. To complicate matters, in Lawrence's case too often the "experts" have not read him thoroughly (Lawrence, of all people, needs to be read in toto) or have misunderstood him.

So thank goodness for Mr. Wolcott's corrective insights.

HERBERT MEREDITH ORRELL
Albuquerque, N.M.

YEARS OF LYNDON JOHNSON

In his article "The Years of Lyndon Johnson" (October *Atlantic*), Robert A. Caro states flatly that "the robber barons of the last century looted the nation's land of its wealth . . . and used part of that wealth to ensure that the government would not force them to return more than a pittance of their loot to the nation's people . . ."

The so-called robber-baron period was one of unprecedented economic growth and unprecedented capital investment, which is inconsistent with "looting" and returning "only a pittance." What does Mr. Caro believe happened to all that iron, coal, and coke? These materials were, and could only be, consumed by society at large.

Only to the extent that those in power divert the resources of a society into pyramid-building or other useless works of self-glorification can one talk about "looting." Of course one can cite egregious examples of conspicuous consumption, such as J. P. Morgan's yacht, but the rich are always with us, are they not?

WILLIAM GALLACHER
Toronto, Ontario

When Robert A. Caro's magnificent opus, *The Power Broker*, broke with such Tolstoyan force upon the literary scene, its readers never suspected that this book—the product of seven years of tireless research and Herculean, indeed, Mosaic writing efforts, a book that could spellbind one for 1100+ pages, thus guaranteeing Caro a place in the nonfiction pantheon—was only the dry run for a more stupendous project, one that would dwarf it the way the Ver-

razano Narrows Bridge dwarfs the Bronx-Whitestone.

But they would find out.

JAMES W. CONRAD, JR.
Washington, D.C.

ADVICE & CONSENT

James Fallows's article "The Vietnam Generation" (July *Atlantic*) raised some interesting questions about prejudice against Vietnam veterans in Congress.

According to Fallows, Senator Alan Cranston of California led the opposition to a Vietnam veteran, Tom Pauken, to head the ACTION Agency because the veteran had served in military intelligence. Apparently, Cranston's reasoning was that since ACTION is indirectly connected to the Peace Corps, the nomination could appear to link the Peace Corps and the intelligence community.

Yet, the deputy director of the Peace Corps from 1969 to 1971, Tom Houser, had served in Army counter-intelligence in the mid-1950s. Cranston and others currently in the Senate did not oppose Houser in 1969, even though the appointment provided "the appearance of a connection" between the Peace Corps and intelligence.

Why the vigorous opposition to a Vietnam vet on intelligence grounds, but support for an Eisenhower-era vet with roughly the same background? Sadly, Fallows's article indicates that an atmosphere of prejudice still exists against those veterans who served our country in Vietnam.

ROBERT VAN DOPP
Waldorf, Md.

In reply to a letter in the November *Atlantic*, Eleanor Perényi asks the question "Can one obtain a degree in meteorology?" The answer, of course, is yes. One university that offers such a degree—both masters and Ph.D.—is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, only a few miles from *The Atlantic*.

DIANA M. DICKINSON
Boston, Mass.

Stanley Kunitz's "The Wellfleet Whale" (November *Atlantic*) is one of the most beautiful, and beautifully crafted, poems of recent years. Thank you for publishing it.

JOYCE CAROL OATES
Princeton, N.J.



REPORTS & COMMENT

CANCÚN "NORTH" AND "SOUTH" AT THE SUMMIT

No answers were found at the meeting in Mexico, but at least the tone of the discussion was hopeful



NATION BY NATION they arrived, stepping off their jets onto the red-carpeted runway of an airport carved out of the jungle of an island off the Yucatán peninsula. The Algerians, wearing the smug smiles of founding members of the movement of non-aligned nations, spoke only to those whose good faith had long since been carved in stone. The Chinese looked frightened and out of place and spoke to no one at all. The Saudi princes seemed to glide along knowingly, their white, black, or brown robes billowing as they held hands,

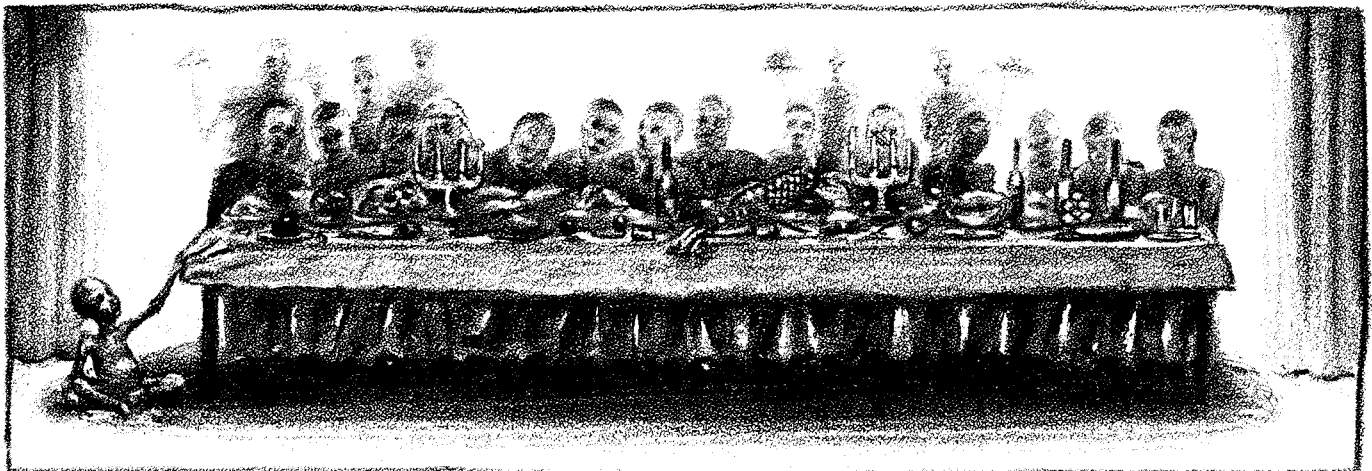
whispered, and cast furtive glances at everyone else. The Guyanese wore lapel buttons that pictured their president, Forbes Burnham. The Japanese brought along their own Sony television sets and, never the ones to be caught unprepared, a supply of Japanese mineral water. President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines brought his own furniture and thousands of copies of a biography of himself. The French went straight to the local Club Méditerranée, where they could eat and drink in the manner to which they are accustomed.

There was a Noah's Ark quality to this summit, last October, of eight countries from the industrialized "North" and fourteen from the developing "South," brought together out of a sense that catastrophe is impending unless the world finds a better way to share its resources and its wealth. But in the end, the result reached there may resemble nothing so much as the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the 1928 agreement fashioned by an American secretary of state, Frank Kellogg, and a French foreign minister, Aristide Briand. The Kellogg-Briand Pact re-

nounced war as an instrument of national policy and eventually attracted the signature of nearly every nation in the world. A ban on war proved difficult to enforce. The joint declaration of Cancún eloquently restated the case for a more just international economic order, and said that "hunger must be eradicated"; it simply failed to say how.

The "North-South dialogue" is probably as awkward a diplomatic process as has ever been fashioned. The poor nations of the world are, in effect, throwing themselves at the feet of the rich, trying to find the mix of stridency and reason that will bring results. They threaten and cajole, appeal to charity and fear, yet somehow try to preserve their dignity along the way. The rich countries, meanwhile, faced with domestic economic conditions that do not exactly inspire confidence, find themselves saying: "We understand. We really do. But we've got problems too, and you have to try to understand them . . . and be patient."

This particular installment of the dialogue took place at one of the world's



newest and most luxurious seaside resorts, and there were moments when the mere fact of this assembly of twenty-two governments seemed to eclipse the substance of their discussions. The Mexican sponsors of the summit produced souvenir tote bags, ashtrays, pencils, and Frisbees; they issued a stamp to commemorate the occasion and gave every delegate a first-day cover. The pomp of the official arrival and departure ceremonies came complete with schoolchildren trucked in to wave streamers and cheer for people they had probably never heard of. All of this was just a lot of noise to the Mexican peasants in the town, their faces frozen in bafflement.

ANY CONFERENCE of this sort is in danger of seeming extravagant or irrelevant. But this international encounter was worth some expense and some risks. For one thing, it featured a subtle change in the tone that prevailed at earlier meetings—away from exhortation, toward nuts and bolts. Talk of duty and obligation was replaced, at least part of the time, by discussion of capacity and willingness to help. And whereas Jimmy Carter, the self-proclaimed friend of the Third World, had sworn never to go near such a gathering, his hard-nosed successor, Ronald Reagan, plunged in with gusto.

(Along with him, of course, Reagan brought an enormous White House press corps. If the spokesmen for the poorer countries thought that meant access to the American media, which rarely discuss issues of development, they were in for a surprise. "We'll try to feed you as often as possible," Secretary of State Alexander Haig promised at an early briefing in the makeshift White House press room, situated in the basement of the hotel where most of the American reporters stayed. The Reagan Administration did feed the media, and many American journalists' accounts of what happened at Cancún came straight from that official source. Some members of the White House press spent an entire week there without meeting a single foreign delegate.)

Understandably, Reagan's behavior was viewed by everyone as a major issue. Although the Mexicans took great pains to treat him as just another head of state, he did get the best hotel room in town. In the weeks before the Cancún summit, Reagan had given two tough

speeches—one to the annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, and the other to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia—that seemed to reject the whole basis of the undertaking. Official development assistance he dismissed as handouts, which would not solve the poorest countries' problems even if it was more widely available. The best path to prosperity, the President said, was to be found through free trade and private investment. No nation had ever been less developed than the fledgling United States of America, and look how far it had come through economic freedom.

But once on the scene, Reagan and his team impressed their counterparts with their moderation. After only noting the absence of the Soviet Union (which had been invited, but ignored the whole affair on the grounds that international economic disparities are exclusively the fault of the West), they mercifully dropped the subject. There were no great promises of new American aid. Reagan did say he would send U.S. agricultural task forces around the world to help the neediest become self-sufficient—but the cost would be borne by private business rather than by the government. And the United States did accept the hitherto controversial principle of further "global negotiations"—someplace, sometime, somehow—to talk about how to share wealth more evenly.

That was not the concession it might at first have seemed. For if Reagan learned anything at Cancún, it was that the richest country in the world was becoming increasingly isolated from all the rest on these issues. America could not merely sit back, point proudly to its past record, and give lectures on laissez-faire economics, when even the Conservative Government of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was supporting global negotiations. And the United States was asking plenty of favors itself—imploping others to take on a bigger share of the Western defense burden and to join a kind of international anti-communist crusade. Once it paused in its lectures on how-to-succeed-just-like-us and listened to what others were saying, the American delegation found much of the dialogue quite reasonable.

To be sure, there was some ranting and raving, and more than one delegate demanded an international income tax to enforce sharing. But there were also the

measured remarks of President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, a country that inherited little in the way of infrastructure or know-how from the colonial era and whose only recent accomplishment was to drive Idi Amin from power in neighboring Uganda. That venture devastated Tanzania's already weak economy. Nyerere appeared to have examined Reagan's pre-conference remarks and designed a persuasive reply:

We are here to talk about poverty and what can be done to bring it to an end for the good of us all, including the richer among us. We are talking about individual poverty—people perpetually suffering from the diseases of undernourishment and therefore unable to do a good day's work, and people continually threatened by actual starvation. We are also talking about the kind of national poverty which means that nations are too poor to have the capacity to invest and thus to increase their wealth-production in the future.

... it is now recognized that no nation lives, or can live, in isolation. We are all affected by ... the linkages created by the present systems of international production and exchange.

World trade depends upon the ability of people to buy. A salesman has to be interested in the prosperity of his potential customer. The poverty of the poor is thus a matter of economic concern for the rich. It is also a matter of political concern; not even the poorest will indefinitely accept a further reduction in their standard of living without protests—and political instability in any nation creates an opportunity for external intervention and thus a possible change in the so-called "balance of power."

And in recent years the poor have been getting poorer ... Our balance-of-payments deficits are enormous, and getting greater. This is not because we are trying to live as though we were rich. It is because our already low income is constantly being reduced as a result of our participation in international trade ...

The increasing impoverishment of the poor is not the result of some evil conspiracy by anyone. It results from the system of international trade and exchange which has grown up over the years ... we find ourselves always selling cheap, and always buying dear.

... the poor are the first and worst victims of the present system; but we are not the only victims. When we cannot pay for the goods from industrialized countries, their economies also decline. The evidence is there.

... the Third World is not asking for charity but making a proposal for dealing with a world problem. We are asking for a chance to earn our own living in a just international system. We are asking for an end to the system which now causes wealth automatically to flow from the poor to the rich. And we are asking for the implementation of the world commitment to attack the poverty which endangers all of us—rich and poor alike.

If the Americans found it hard to accept that straight talk from a committed socialist, they could listen instead to the Nigerians, who understand well the benefits of international trade, if only because they are the second-largest foreign suppliers of oil to the United States. Dr. Ishaya Audu, the Nigerian minister of external affairs, said that yes, he could understand the value of individual initiative and the importance of a middle class—for “if you only have a little and you spread it too thin, then nobody has anything.” But as for this “private-sector voodoo,” Nigeria had tried that route, and it simply did not work. Third World development means, above all, agricultural development, and private business is understandably reluctant to take the substantial risks of investing in agriculture. Nigeria, thinking it had persuaded a major multinational company to do so, ended up instead with only a factory producing a seasoning and other processed foods.

The Brazilians provided another instructive story. Through the application of the principles of free enterprise, they have quickly worked their way into the more prosperous upper tier of the developing world. They have graduated from reliance on international lending institutions and borrowed willingly from the Western banks, to the point that Brazil has an external debt of some \$60 billion, which is still growing. But its ability to keep up with the payments is now threatened by uncertainties in the prices of commodities such as coffee, and its economy could come down like a house of cards at any moment.

One reason for Brazil's debt, of course—and for the exacerbation of other

problems of the developing world—is the skyrocketing cost of energy. Oil prices, traumatic enough for Americans, Europeans, and Japanese, have been disastrous for the Third World, and many economies that seemed on the verge of taking off have stalled completely as a result. The issue was discussed at Cancún, but not as comprehensively as some of the Western participants might have liked. The developing countries were quite prepared to restate their proposal that an affiliate of the World Bank be established to deal with energy, but they were not about to utter a primal scream in front of Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia. A number of Third World countries, including three of the key participants in this conference—Algeria, Venezuela, and Nigeria—are, after all, members of OPEC, and have benefited greatly from oil-price increases. And the very poorest nations are quite frankly afraid to talk to the oil producers the way they do to the Americans and the West Europeans.

Many in the developing world also have a growing, if grudging, admiration for OPEC as a kind of Robin Hood of the international economy, setting an example that they would like to emulate if only they could turn their own resources into something as strategically critical as oil.

Of the fact that OPEC is robbing the rich there can be no doubt; its members' record of redistribution among the world's poor, however, is open to question. (Some OPEC countries claim to be giving development assistance equal to 3 or 4 percent of their gross national product—compared with the official United Nations target of .7 percent, the British record of .4 percent, and the American record of about .25 percent—but it seems clear that they could give much more, in absolute terms, if they were so inclined. Instead they stash their profits away at high interest rates in Western banks, which lend the money back out at even higher rates.)

But the record of OPEC was not the only subject on the unofficial taboo list at Cancún. Reagan and other Western leaders liked to preach about the need for each developing country to “put its own house in order.” But as Nyerere bluntly said, “We are not here to talk about the internal affairs of any of us . . .” Among Nyerere's colleagues at the conference table, however, were people who have hundreds, if not thou-

sands, of political prisoners, who have been using external aid and internal development to enrich themselves and a small privileged class rather than trying to improve the lot of their own down-trodden masses. “Evil propaganda,” declared Dr. Audu, of Nigeria, when asked whether the inequities of the internal distribution of wealth in the developing countries was not a proper topic for discussion. “Corruption is not the exclusive preserve of the Third World,” said President Marcos, of the Philippines. And that was that.

AT THE CLOSE OF the amazingly brief and sadly unfocused conference, the major disagreement was over where to talk next. Some wanted to set up a whole new structure for global negotiations, outside all existing institutions; but to others that sounded like a bureaucratic and administrative nightmare. Most of the developing countries preferred going to the United Nations, where each government's vote has as much weight as any other's, so a rhetorical majority easily translates into a practical one. The United States, however, found itself arguing on behalf of the unique competence of existing specialized agencies such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund to handle the specific implementation of good intentions. In the latter two agencies, voting is weighted on the basis of contributions, so it is difficult for the South to gang up on the North; the Bank and the Fund also tend to impose Western-style conditions on some of their loans, and those conditions run up against Third World ideologies. (There is an irony just now in American enthusiasm for the World Bank and the IMF: the United States is behind in its promised contributions to them, especially to the International Development Association, the window at the World Bank that gives fifty-year loans to the poorest countries at virtually no interest. Congress has been feuding over whether to honor the American pledges, and the Reagan Administration, knowing the unpopularity of “foreign aid” among its conservative constituency, has been unwilling to fight for what it claims is right.)

The conference's eventual compromise, hammered out by the president of Venezuela, was to assert that all the leaders assembled there “confirmed the



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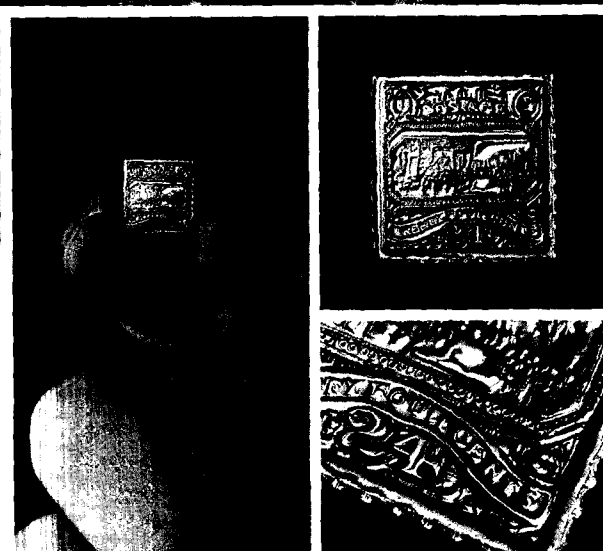
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desirability of supporting at the United Nations, with a sense of urgency, a consensus to launch Global Negotiations on a basis to be mutually agreed and in circumstances offering the prospect of meaningful progress." In the absence of anything more concrete, that would have to represent the spirit of Cancún for now.

The Indians gave gifts to reporters who attended Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's news conference at the end of

the summit, and on their last night in Cancún some journalists found little trinkets from the Filipinos in their hotel mailboxes. The Japanese took their leftover mineral water back home to Tokyo. A few days later, it was learned that because of a poor maize harvest in Tanzania, famine is imminent.

—Sanford J. Ungar

Sanford J. Ungar is a host of All Things Considered, on National Public Radio.



LONDON LOCAL SURPRISES

As head of a little-publicized city agency, Ken Livingstone hopes to change life in London



ACROSS THE THAMES from Big Ben and the Palace of Westminster is a crescent-shaped building on the riverfront—County Hall, the headquarters of the Greater London Council. The GLC was created by an Act of Parliament in 1963, and until not very long ago, it went about its business in a reasonably unostentatious way; as recently as mid-1980, the official guide book to County Hall could say that “as one stands on the terrace there is a pleasant sense of seclusion in the midst of a thriving city.” But last May the bemused citizens of Greater London—and, for that matter, of much of the rest of the coun-

try—acquired a lively interest in the activities of the GLC and in particular of its new left-wing leader, Ken Livingstone.

Livingstone now attracts as great a following from the press as do Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Michael Foot, the leader of the Labour Party—remarkably, since he is striking neither in appearance (he looks like a lukewarm Lech Walesa) nor as an orator (much of what he has to say is routine stuff about bureaucracy, the media, the tyranny of central government) and since the everyday work of the authority he leads is both complex and humdrum. Responsibility for local government in Greater London is shared by the GLC with thirty-two borough councils and the City of London; the GLC's ninety-odd elected members do not deal with many local services, which are the province of the boroughs. They do enjoy some executive responsibility for certain “metropolitan” services—transport, fire, land drainage, sewage, prevention of pollution, upkeep and management of parks and concert halls, and so on. The

GLC is also described as the strategic planning authority for the whole of London, but in the years since the council's birth, large-scale strategic planning has fallen out of fashion, though the central government has recently established an urban development corporation for London's blighted docklands and created an “enterprise zone” with various fiscal and financial incentives for the regeneration of the inner city.

The scope and nature of the GLC's duties have never been entirely clear to the majority of Londoners, who have for some years been content to think that most of the council's attention is devoted to the construction of an enormous, vastly sophisticated, and inordinately expensive (£508 million at September, 1980, prices) barrier, devised to prevent the Thames from flooding low-lying parts of the city should there be a conjunction of high tides, heavy rain, and wind. Bus shelters and public buildings carry posters exhorting those in “risk areas” to practice ingenious methods of escape from such flooding, even after the barrier is finished, this year, but few people take the threat sufficiently seriously to remember what the warning klaxons sound like or whether one is supposed to return home or flee.

Suddenly, however, the GLC is all over the newspapers. Its large, important tasks may not catch the public imagination, but its personalities do. Livingstone became leader of the GLC in May, in an election in which Labour took power with fifty seats to the Conservatives' forty-one. (There is one Liberal, and one of the Labour councillors later became a Social Democrat, resigned her seat, and won the subsequent by-election.) Twenty of the Labour councillors elected had previously served in opposition; thirty were new to the GLC. Of the entire fifty, thirty supported Livingstone's election to the leadership of the Labour group and therefore of the council, repudiating a moderate, Andrew McIntosh. So Livingstone had a cohort of dedicated and articulate supporters, pledged to fulfill a manifesto they had published before the 1981 election, which, they passionately maintained, constituted their “mandate.”

In their manifesto they had promised to lower the cost of London bus and underground fares by some 25 percent, to encourage community art and theater, to devise machinery for reviving manu-

facturing industry in the capital, to assist the efforts of the Metropolitan Police, and to pay greater attention to the needs and difficulties of ethnic minorities. The problem has been that many of these admirable ambitions can be achieved only slowly (an intricate system of subsidies to arts and recreational bodies already exists, even if it is condemned as "elitist") or with friction (the home secretary is constitutionally responsible for the Metropolitan Police) or at huge expense (the simplified London Transport fare structure will cost GLC rate-payers an extra £125 million in 1981-1982). The energetic visionaries on Livingstone's team are chafed by the need to find the appropriate legal powers to support their efforts; to follow necessary procedures before money can be allocated, let alone spent; and to take account of reasoned objections. Action, it seems, does not follow the counting of the ballots.

Livingstone seeks to compensate for the inevitable frustrations of his office by floating footling notions and announcements. Taken singly, they might not be so unfortunate, but together they have been a public-relations disaster for Livingstone. His first pronouncement was on the royal wedding, to which he refused to go, because he felt it more important to spend the day looking after London's other business. Then there was the matter of the March of the Unemployed, which he proposed to celebrate not only by receiving the marchers in County Hall and bedding them down with cups of tea (a gesture to be applauded, one would think) but by proclaiming a day on which, paradoxically, GLC employees would absent themselves from seeing to London's business. At some point—he expressed his support for the plight of London's homosexuals (or, more accurately, Gays in the Greater London Area). He announced a sweeping reduction in London's civil-defense precautions, since, it was reliably reported, he maintained that the GLC should become a nuclear-free zone. The police came in for a drubbing, especially after the Brixton riots, but Livingstone refused to condemn those IRA members who exploded a bomb outside Chelsea Barracks, killing a pedestrian and injuring other passersby. "They are not criminals or lunatics running about," Livingstone declared. "That is to misunderstand them."

This last remark, explained, too late, by a letter in the next day's *Times*, provoked Conservative councillors to seek to censure Livingstone. They were defeated by half a dozen votes, and Livingstone's deputy announced, "Today the GLC is extricating itself from Northern Ireland." But the damage to Londoners' sensibilities had been done. Livingstone is by now such a bogeyman that he takes the blame for everything: the declaration by Councillor George Nicholson (proposed as the occupant of a new post to supervise political education in schools) that the GLC should auction off art treasures held in trust by the public; the fact that Jeremy Thorpe, the former leader of the Liberal Party, discredited after his trial for conspiracy to murder his homosexual lover, applied for the post of race-relations adviser to the GLC (he was not appointed); and the triumphant election of a Social Democrat to the House of Commons in a by-election in South London ("Thank you Livingstone," said the newsstand placards). Livingstone's public image has not been helped by the glee with which satirists have seized on the few hobbies in his otherwise bleak private life—in particular, the collection of toads and salamanders that he keeps. According to an aide, these are "the perfect pets for a politician, since they not only dislike company but positively resent it, and since they also like to be fed irregularly." There is now much ribald talk of Livingstone's newt, a creature that unaccountably always causes helpless mirth in the average Briton.

The most painful problem of all for Livingstone has been Londoners' reaction to the supplementary rate demands they received from the GLC in mid-October. The financing of local government expenditure is a complicated mixture of "rates" levied on domestic, business, and industrial residents, calculated according to a formula based on the size and nature of their property, and grants from central government, which are dispensed in proportion to local needs, assessed in the light of demographic and other factors (and expressed very much in this sort of language). Local authorities are also entitled to borrow in various ways. London residents receive a multiple demand, consisting of the rate levied by the borough in which they live, the Metropolitan Police rate, the Inner London Education Authority [ILEA] rate, and the GLC rate. Rate demands

are issued in April, at the beginning of the new financial year, but local authorities have the power to issue supplementary rate demands, which is what the newly elected GLC did in October.

This time the supplementary rate was some 24.5 pence for every pound at which domestic property was rated (an increase of about 17.5 percent over the demand issued only six months earlier). Rates are collected by the boroughs. Conservative-controlled boroughs added a note of explanation to the rate demand, excusing its size and lamenting the GLC's rapacity. The chairman of the Borough Council of Westminster declared that when he and his colleagues read this precept, their first inclination was to consign it to the wastepaper basket, and went on to suggest that rate-payers do the same. The letter that rate-payers in the Kensington and Chelsea Borough received from their chairman stated that "the GLC and the ILEA have required us to levy from you their supplementary rate. We cannot refuse, although we should clearly like to, as Parliament requires us to be their collecting agency." The letter continued: "You may be tempted to ignore this demand. . . . Please be assured, however, that not one penny will be kept by this Council, which is continuing to practise the most stringent economies and keeping to its budget, which is the lowest of any Council in London. It will all go to County Hall in response to their most untimely demand."

Labour-controlled boroughs, on the other hand, reminded householders of the advantages that would be brought by the new, if apparently costly, subsidies for London Transport—subsidies that had necessitated the levying of the supplementary rate. The GLC asked domestic rate-payers for an additional £180 million in 1980-1981 and non-domestic rate-payers for an extra £288 million. In theory, local authorities can pitch the rate as high as they wish; in fact, such habits topple them at election time. Furthermore, central government, seeking to trim what Mrs. Thatcher and her supporters regard as inflationary revenue-raising and expenditure, has introduced legislation to curb the amount of money local authorities can demand, particularly from business and industry, and to require the holding of a referendum before a supplementary rate may be levied. Livingstone's reply to this, displayed prominently and at no negligible ex-

pense in advertisements in national newspapers and in a new and scruffy tabloid, *The Londoner* (delivered free to 2.7 million homes at a cost per issue of £87,000), is that his mandate is "fresher" than that of central government, since his people were elected only a year or so ago whereas Mrs. Thatcher's were elected in 1979. A more convincing line of argument is that customary ideas of local democracy are being destroyed by central government's policy, but put Livingstone's advertisements alongside the dejected apologies accompanying the London boroughs' rate demands and one sees what a mess the whole system is in anyway.

Some Labour GLC councillors have threatened to go to prison rather than have their manifesto promises unfulfilled; others, especially those with assets that could be seized if the council were to find itself "surcharged" for illegal expenditure, mutter about resignation. There are prophecies that the GLC might find traditional lenders suddenly tightfisted; hitherto the council has been able to borrow on the security of its rates, but this practice might not continue. Here and there, Cassandras talk of the total abolition of the GLC, although the present Conservative Government, let alone Parliament and the civil servants in Whitehall, has by now had such a basinful of local-government legislation that it would probably shrink from finding time for more. In any case, it would be easier to whittle down the GLC's functions in more subtle ways: most of its housing responsibilities have been handed over to the boroughs already; central government is unhappy with the present system of giving grants for transport, especially when they are used to subsidize fares rather than for long-term investment; a new kind of public police authority is likely to be established in the aftermath of Lord Scarman's report on the Brixton riots; the fire brigade and other public-health and safety services could easily be rearranged; and even the Thames barrier is almost finished.

Livingstone seems unruffled by all this melancholy speculation. He has at least awakened those who live and work in London to the existence of the GLC; indeed, they rise each day rubbing their eyes in wonderment at his latest announcement. If Londoners are increasingly wringing their hands in exasperation as well, they can take solace in the

fact that the intentions of Livingstone and his team are part of a coherent and long-nurtured philosophy. For, according to a radio interview he gave last autumn, Livingstone's favorite book is, he says, *The Dispossessed*, a science-fiction story in which "all the anarchists leave the capitalist world, avoid the establishment of new bureaucracies, share in running things—a genuinely Socialist society."

—Janet Morgan

Janet Morgan is a London-based writer now at work on the authorized biography of Agatha Christie.



CAIRO

THEY DON'T MISS SADAT

Many Egyptians felt that their president, in his dependence on the U.S., had compromised their country's dignity



IN THE AFTERMATH of President Sadat's assassination, the manifest indifference of most Egyptians provided a curious counterpoint to worldwide expressions of shock and grief. In the past two years or so, Egyptian attitudes toward Sadat and his policies had undergone a sea change. The support given him by his countrymen during a decade of virtually unchallenged rule was at times considerable and even emotional. He engaged them not by the impress of

his personality, as Nasser did, but by his ability to seize the moment: in 1972 by sending the omnipresent Soviet patrons packing; in 1973 by redeeming Egypt's crushing defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967 through an initially successful invasion of Israel; in 1977 by opting out of the costly recurring cycle of death and destruction. He also promised to improve upon a faltering Nasserian socialism, through "democratization" and a shower of economic benefits that would flow from peace, the U.S. alliance, and a new, liberal, "open-door" economic approach. In each of these policies Sadat, while striving to outdistance or differentiate himself from his predecessor, appealed to sympathies widely shared by Egyptians.

By October, 1981, however, the mood of the country had soured. The pressures on Sadat grew from the economic and political promissory notes that were now coming due—on which he could probably never have made good, given the intractable material problems Egypt has traditionally faced. After the October, 1973, war, Sadat inaugurated an open-door economic policy, aimed at reinvigorating the private sector by removing government constraints and attracting private foreign capital. Announced as an explicit improvement upon Nasserian socialism, the new approach was intended to rescue the Egyptian economy from the doldrums of the "old" rigidly controlled economic order. Subsequently, Sadat held out prospective economic dividends as rewards for each successive stage of the peace negotiations with the Israelis—both the step-by-step process undertaken with Henry Kissinger and the later post-Jerusalem and Camp David talks. Peace became almost a form of currency: relations with the United States and other Western industrial nations, as well as Arab oil monies attracted to Egypt in its post-radical phase, would shower plenitude upon the Egyptian people.

Those charged with fulfilling these promises had to find a way to climb off the tiger of the "old" economic order without being politically devoured in the process. Egyptians have long been accustomed to stringent government controls on prices of commodities basic to their existence—wheat flour, corn, sugar, rice, edible oil, tea, and butane gas. (When the government tried, in 1977, to raise the cost of these commodities significantly, widespread rioting ensued.)

Domestic-energy prices are also kept below world-market levels, and prices of goods produced by public-sector industries are periodically frozen to stem inflation. In addition to the budgetary cost of the direct subsidies (for 1981-1982 they are projected at about \$2.9 billion, or 11 percent of gross domestic product), other serious cost and price distortions throughout the economy inhibit investment and saddle the government with an ever-widening budget deficit.

So far, private-sector growth has occurred chiefly at the margins, in such services as banking and tourism. Egypt's increased oil output, growing tourist industry, and sizable remittances from expatriate workers produced a strong improvement in its balance of payments in 1980 (leaving a deficit of \$600 million, down from \$1.7 billion in 1979). But the country remains heavily dependent on foreign aid to balance its accounts, with about \$1 billion from the United States and approximately the same amount from other sources in 1980. In the longer term, the 3 percent growth of the population ensures an intensifying economic squeeze on the country's resources. Neither limited arable land—now quite efficiently farmed but yielding only 70 percent of the nation's needs—nor government agencies and public-sector corporations will be able to absorb the 300,000 to 400,000 new workers entering the labor force each year. Thus future economic development, and political equilibrium, may depend on Egypt's becoming a manufactured-goods exporter—at best a difficult goal.

Average Egyptians do not, of course, understand the connection between these structural problems and the failure of Sadat's peace and open-door policies to produce broad economic gains. What they do seem to feel is disappointment and disillusionment that their material well-being has not improved as promised, and they are increasingly resentful of the gap between themselves and the wealthy class of Egyptian capitalists spawned by the open-door policy. In fact, by most indices, the average Egyptian is probably better off now than he was a decade ago. Improved health care has increased life expectancy (pushing up the population curve); average caloric intake is extremely high for the Third World, meeting the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's daily calorie requirements; consumer goods are read-



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ily available; the government has significantly raised the wages of those on fixed incomes (with an average increase of 38 percent projected for 1981–1982). On the other hand, attempts to loosen price controls have produced rates of inflation shockingly high to the previously protected Egyptian consumer. (A 20 percent rate of inflation in 1980, according to Egyptian officials, was brought back down to 11 percent in 1981.) In addition, acute and growing shortages of both housing and jobs affect most Egyptian families in some way.

Meanwhile, the widely reported conspicuous consumption of Cairo's West-

most surrounding the pyramids. In its center, stately stone mansions from Farouk's era, splendid and crumbling, crowd together with socialist office towers and new luxury hotels. Dust from omnipresent construction mingles with desert sand, underfoot and in the nostrils. Traffic snarls and pedestrians jam streets and pavements designed for a fraction of the present population.

Outside the city, scattered building sites represent government efforts to keep up with the flow of people into the urban area, but most of Cairo's poor dwell in warren-like slums, spilling into the mud and brick tombs of the city's an-

marred by darker feelings. That night, at least, Egypt's wealthiest class evidently shared the political mood of their countrymen.

In the days immediately before the assassination, reasons for a widespread disaffection came through clearly. Apart from economic discontent, two themes ran through conversations I had with a variety of English-speaking non-official Egyptians. Few of them saw any real alternative to the continued leadership of Sadat or to his policy of normalizing relations with Israel. No one seriously entertained the prospect of another war with Israel. Yet most of them also felt that Sadat had compromised Egypt's independence and dignity: that he had made Egypt a toady of the United States, and that playing his peace card had left Egypt impotent in the face of Israeli irredentism on the West Bank.

The U.S. presence in Egypt has grown mightily in the past eight years. The number of Americans connected with the embassy and the Agency for International Development (including temporary contractors) has grown to about 900 since Ambassador Hermann Eilts arrived in 1973 with a staff of six to reopen the embassy after the years of ruptured relations following the 1967 war. U.S. arms sales to Egypt totaled nearly \$3 billion between 1979 and fiscal year 1982, and there are about 145 American military personnel and related civilian staff in the country. This number is likely to rise as planes and tanks on order are delivered.

However, resentment of American dominance does not, as in Iran, stem chiefly from abrasive contact with a large U.S. presence. For one thing, the private American contractors, salesmen, entrepreneurs, and hustlers who thronged the shah's kingdom have found Egypt's pickings much slimmer. Only about 10,000 Americans now live in Egypt, compared with 40,000 to 50,000 in Iran in 1978 and 40,000 in Saudi Arabia today.

More important, intense popular feelings have been directed less against the United States than against the Egyptian president who took in the Americans' shah; who offered military facilities to the U.S.; who did not protest American shelving of the West Bank/Palestinian issue; who returned from a triumphal state visit to Washington to face a new U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation agreement. Sadat seemed, to Egypt-



ernized jet-setting millionaires reminds Egyptians of the shortfall between the promised and the delivered fruits of liberalization and the U.S. alliance. In effect, while nothing that Egyptians enjoyed under Nasser's socialism has been taken away from them, a new class has been grafted on at the top, leaving the general mass increasingly resentful. Egyptians identified the Sadat family with the new plutocrats. The Sadats' personal elegance in dress, their dozen or so official residences, their relationship through their son-in-law with the country's wealthiest and most flamboyant fat cat, Osman Ahmed Osman—all these things distanced Sadat, in the popular view, from his self-characterization as a man of the village.

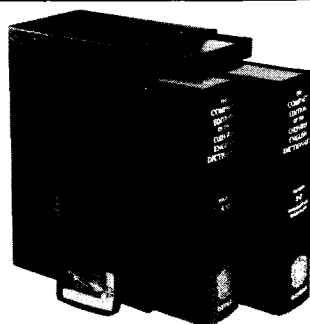
CAIRO DIRECTLY REPRESENTS the anomalies, achievements, dysfunctions, and dynamism of the Egyptian economy. This city of more than 10 million people sprawls into the desert, al-

cient burial ground. The central plaza near the big hotels is dominated by a French confectionery emporium, dispensing bonbons and gâteaux; department stores and boutiques are stocked with clothing and electrical gadgets; airline offices and travel agencies stand elbow-to-elbow. Five minutes away by car (twenty-five in bad traffic) an Arabic curtain falls: streets wind among coffeehouses, food shops, small stores, low-rise office buildings.

Cairo's life continues well into the night, with cars, trucks, and people making the run toward their final destinations hours after darkness has fallen. On the evening of the day Sadat was killed, several lavish weddings took place as scheduled at the Nile Hilton Hotel. Guests in strapless gowns and tuxedos teased the wedding parties as they smirked for photographers. Comfortable in the dark opulence of the international hotel, families and friends gave no sign that their pleasure was

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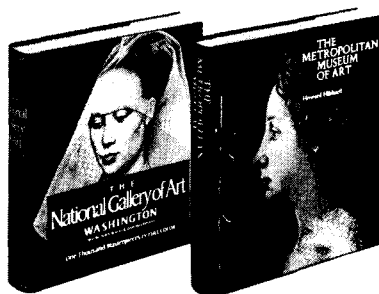
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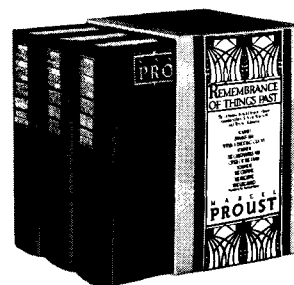
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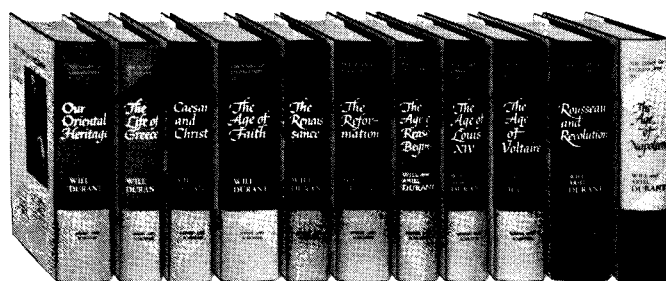
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tians, almost pathetically eager to proclaim loyalty to his U.S. ally. In their view, the Americans did not, however, manifest a corresponding sense of responsibility toward Egypt. Instead, they left their new ally alone on the limb of a failed peace process during almost two years of election campaigns and rhetorical regrouping by the new administration. Sadat permitted the Americans to take Egypt for granted.

Furthermore, Egyptians quietly asked, how long would the United States be willing to sustain its large-scale aid? Wouldn't the Americans decide, sooner or later, to turn the jerry-built Egyptian economy over to the ministrations of the International Monetary Fund? In that case, it would have been smarter to stick with the Arabs: the wealthy oil powers' manifold ties to Egypt would have ensured longer-term commitment.

NOW AND FOR THE future, Egyptian attitudes toward the United States correspond closely to the state of their relations with Israel. Since the signing of the Camp David accords, the country has been figuratively holding its breath until the final transfer of Sinai territory next April. Officials involved in the negotiations express patient understanding of Israeli fears, and some hope that an open border with Egypt may help to allay them. Before the assassination, at any rate, the Egyptian foreign ministry stood firmly committed to continuing Camp David negotiations with Israel (more firmly, perhaps, than the United States): Sadat needed to achieve something for the Palestinians, and if he ceased to try he would have to say he had failed.

Outside the government, however, Egyptians don't hide their anger at what they see as Israeli stonewalling on West Bank autonomy. While Egyptians continued to insist that the autonomy arrangement be treated as a transition to ultimate Israeli surrender of the territories (as agreed to previously in UN Resolution 242), the Israelis rejected all formulations that might weaken an eventual Israeli claim to sovereignty. This fundamental difference blocked virtually all progress on the West Bank and Gaza, thus validating (in Egyptian minds) the other Arabs' accusations that Sadat was selling out his brothers to get back the Sinai. In effect, the separate peace seemed to Egyptians to have lib-

erated Israeli irredentism, as seen in the proliferating West Bank settlements and in the air raids on Iraq and Lebanon. The image of a toothless Egypt lying somnolent while the Israelis strode forth with impunity greatly affronted the Egyptians' sense of pride.

THE RESIDUAL EGYPTIAN hostility toward the rest of the Arab world—whose battles they had fought, whose dues they had paid—vigorously expressed in 1977, seems to have disappeared.

Sadat often excoriated the Arabs for not supporting him, and apparently he felt extreme bitterness at their denunciations of him after Camp David. Shortly before his death, few of his countrymen appeared to share his largely personal animus. Instead they insisted on Egypt's place in the Arab world, and often added, wishfully, that relationships had not changed that much—except officially. (Heavy Saudi and Kuwaiti investment in Egyptian real estate reportedly continues at about the same rate as before, and large numbers of Egyptians still man the infrastructure of Arab oil production. Sizable grants from several Arab states have, however, been cut off, and Egypt has been excised from the roster of participants in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy in the Middle East.)

Normalized relations with Israel, on the other hand, struck most Egyptians as a pretty cold proposition. Despite Sadat's personal warmth for his "brother Menachem," Egyptians generally evinced no interest in expanding ties with Israel in the absence of real progress toward a general peace. Very few Egyptians have visited Israel (fewer than 2,000, out of a population of 43 million in 1980), whereas Israeli tourists have streamed to Egypt (about 13,000, out of a population of 4 million, in 1980—jumping to 12,000 in the first four months of 1981). Egyptians say that their bonds with European countries are much stronger and of longer duration, and that "normalization" of relations with Israel will have to develop normally. Some express the hope, though, that Israel's desire for "real" normalization, with expanding trade and exchange of peoples, might change the current balance of power between the two countries, giving Egypt some leverage over Israel on the West Bank and Gaza issues.

WITH THE ASSASSINATION of Sadat, the Islamic fundamentalist assailants clearly attempted to disrupt this gradual trend toward normalization. Hard information about the fundamentalists is difficult to come by. After the assassination, Egyptians and the foreign press could at best trade private rumors and anecdotes about its roots and effects; the extent of real support for the fundamentalists remains obscure. Increasing numbers of female students at Cairo University are donning the veil; the headmen of a village recently reviled Jihan Sadat for immodesty, in not properly covering her shoulders and head while visiting with them; Islamic leaders were able to turn out 100,000 for a prayer meeting in the plaza before Abdin Palace (the Egyptian White House) last August, whereas the government was able to assemble fewer than 10,000 rather surly demonstrators for a pro-Sadat rally after the September crackdown on Islamic leaders and other critics of the regime.

On the whole, activists are said to be few, but estimates of general support within the population range up to 20 percent. Before the assassination, neither government officials nor private experts apparently speculated much about fundamentalist infiltration of the military. In the ordinary run of things, outsiders seldom sense the political currents within an army until after a coup has occurred, and penetrating the Islamic movements is very difficult—their adherents do not talk to outsiders willingly, even about their ideology. Moreover, many Westernized Egyptians do not like to think about Moslem activism. Islam is part of their cultural and social, if not religious, milieu, as well as a recurring element in Egyptian nationalism. Their emotional response is complicated in many cases by their sympathy for the frustrations propelling adherents into the fundamentalist camp. Yet if fundamentalist power should grow in Egypt, their life-style, values, and even their mode of thought will come under siege.

While the capacity of Egypt's governmental structures for absorbing or resisting this movement cannot be known until it is tested, uncertainty—about the size, shape, and force of the movement—begets free-floating anxiety. From 1977 to 1979, a team of Egyptian academics, led by Professor Saad Ibrahim, of the American University in

Cairo, amassed perhaps the largest and most reliable collection of information about the Islamic fundamentalists by interviewing a group of their leaders who were jailed in 1974 and 1977. These leaders (who agreed to the interviews only after subjecting the scholarly interlocutors to a rigorous test of orientation and competence) emerged as tough, righteous, and fiercely single-minded. They came from middle- and lower-middle-class rural families, and demonstrated high motivation and ability: for the most part they were students or had received degrees in engineering or science—majors that in Egypt require very high grades on the qualifying examinations. They aimed to replace the present corrupt political system with leaders who would rigorously apply the Koran and Hadith in solving the country's problems, and create a truly Moslem social order. While envisioning an Islamic polity as vaguely egalitarian with no excessive wealth or excessive poverty, they had not formulated a clear idea of how it would be structured politically.

Clearly, this select group was both ambitious and sincerely convinced that its vision called it to power. The religious revival offers leaders and followers satisfactions that the material world has withheld. While Egypt loses its place in the Arab world and villagers lose their way in the city, Islam can locate them in an order of righteousness.

To an outsider, however, the Islamic vision appears to offer its adherents an irresistible license to remove the "ins" and install the "outs" at the center of power. Thus the Islamic movement poses a threat to Egypt that is unlikely to diminish until it is played out—or accommodated—in some further way. At present its dynamism appears largely negative: in effect, it is an extremely potent form of anarchy.

President Hosni Mubarak must now confront a series of harsh realities. But Sadat did leave his successor a significant legacy: so thoroughly were Sadat's policies and promises identified with the man himself that his death clears the books of numerous liabilities. He took mortal risks and did not evade their price. If his peace lasts, his country may one day acknowledge its enormous debt.

— Jennifer Seymour Whitaker

Jennifer Seymour Whitaker, the associate editor of Foreign Affairs, was in Egypt at the time of President Sadat's assassination.



THE ECONOMY INFLATION AND UNCERTAINTY

*During the past decade, we may
have suffered more from the latter
than from the former*



MOST OF US TAKE it for granted that the economy is in serious trouble and has been for several years. Since the evidence for this belief seems abundant, it is surprising to find that the past decade's overall economic record doesn't look so bad. The nation's gross national product grew an average of slightly more than 3 percent a year in the 1970s, not quite up to the 4 percent average of the two previous decades but hardly the stuff of crisis. Without the recession years of 1974 and 1975, the three decades would have been roughly comparable in growth rates. Per capita income—after taxes, corrected for inflation—went up about 25 percent in the 1970s. That did not equal the more than 30 percent rise in the 1960s. But it was nearly double the increase of the 1950s, a decade for which nostalgia is in fashion.

These income figures are, to be sure, averages, and they conceal real gains enjoyed and real losses suffered by many. Presumably this was true in the previous decades as well. The averages

do not, however, mask any transfer of resources from the middle class to the poor, from the rich to the middle class, or indeed from any broad income group to any other. The distribution of income in America—the share of the nation's income that goes to each fifth of the population—resembles an inverted pyramid, with households in the top fifth receiving roughly ten times as much income as those in the bottom fifth. In the 1970s, the shape of that pyramid changed scarcely at all.

The fact that Americans as a whole were better off in 1981 than they were in 1970 does not mean there is no crisis, only that we have misperceived its nature. What happened during the past ten years is not that we grew poorer—we didn't—but that we grew less certain. In the relatively placid decades between the end of World War II and the escalation of the war in Vietnam, it was easy to believe not only that the economy could be managed but that it could be trusted. In the 1970s these illusions faded, and were replaced by a sour mixture of disappointment and rage that things weren't working out the way they were supposed to. These feelings had little to do with GNP, average incomes, the extent of inequality, or, indeed, any of the gross measures by which economic performance is ordinarily judged. They had much to do with the economy's betrayal of our expectations.

THE MOST VISIBLE disruptions of the past ten years need little elaboration: they are OPEC's oil-price increases and the resurgence of international competition, notably from the Japanese. Together they hastened the decay of America's industrial heartland and encouraged the migration of industry and people to the Sun Belt, where energy bills are lower and unions still scarce. Per capita incomes, corrected for inflation, grew about 18 percent in the Northeast during the 1970s. In the South and Southwest, incomes rose more than 30 percent. Not all of this shift is to be deplored quite as readily as northern politicians and boosters are wont to deplore it: one can hardly argue that the South should have stayed perpetually poorer and less developed than the North. Still, to a generation raised on the security of the Snow Belt's industrial jobs, the effect has been distressing.

A third source of disruption—the eco-

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conomic effects of the baby boom—went largely unnoticed for most of the decade. Until recently, most people viewed the boom as a mere blip on the population charts. A spate of popular articles and books (Landon Y. Jones's *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation*, for example) has begun to change that perception. In fact, the boom was not a blip but an immense wave, largely unprecedented and entirely unforeseen. In the eighteen years after 1946, more than 75 million children were born. That is approximately one third of the nation's current population, and close to half of everyone over eighteen.

The economic effects of the baby boom have been felt mainly by those who belong to it, and who therefore came of age in the past ten or twelve years. "Between 1969 and 1976," Jones has written, "the total labor force increased by one-sixth, twice the rate of 1955-62 and nearly three times the growth of the nation's population in the same period." In such a labor market, every opening attracts dozens of applicants. The problem is compounded by the astonishing growth in higher education. Colleges and universities had grown only about 2 percent a year in the 1950s; in the 1960s the rate was four times as much. By 1970, nearly half of all college-age youth were enrolled, and a B.A. degree was no longer sufficient to ensure an edge in the job market.

The effects of this competition showed up in wage statistics, as the demographer Richard A. Easterlin has pointed out. In 1955, young men (aged twenty to twenty-four) earned about three quarters of what middle-aged men were making. By the late 1970s, with young men in vast oversupply relative to the pool of older, more experienced workers, the ratio had fallen below three fifths. (The experience of women was similar, though complicated by the fact that the jobs typically held by women began to change in the interim.) Also, as the college-educated proportion of the population rose to its highest level ever, the relative earnings of college graduates declined for the first time. That is the economic reality behind the familiar stories of cab drivers with Ph.D.s and English majors working as short-order cooks. It is also a prime source of the belief widely held among the young that things aren't working out the way they were supposed to. A generation of baby-

boomers was taught by its Depression-bred parents that education and hard work would bring sure rewards. When those rewards must be competed for and divided up among a generational cohort so much larger than that of the parents, they seem less opulent, and the prospects for the future seem less certain.

A FOURTH SOURCE OF disruption is, of course, inflation. Though it is reported in terms of averages, inflation is seldom a smooth increase in the price level. The overall rate in the past decade varied from less than 5 percent in 1976 to more than 12 percent in 1979 and 1980. And the overall rate itself masks vast disparities in the price increases of individual items. Between 1970 and the end of 1980, the Consumer Price Index as a whole rose 122 percent. Yet television sets went up only 4 percent. Clothing, telephone calls, and whiskey rose by fifty percent or less. Appliances and prescription drugs went up about 60 percent, rents about 80 percent. Since incomes were more than doubling in the same period, each of these items grew progressively easier to afford. Energy, homes, and many food items by contrast rose faster than incomes.

The big price increases came in spurts. Food prices rose 30 percent between 1972 and 1974, then rose *less* rapidly than other prices for the rest of the decade. The Labor Department's energy-price index rose nearly 30 percent in 1974, after the first OPEC price hike, and 25 percent in 1979, after the second. In the intervening years it rose at about the same rate as other prices. Yet gradual or modest price increases contribute little to tranquility when an essential budget item such as food or energy may, in a given year, devastate anyone's budget.

Unlike the prices of food and oil, the price of homes crept steadily upward throughout the decade; so did mortgage interest rates. But the effect was the same. Since families don't buy a new house every week, a gradual price rise over time seems like a quantum leap when a family enters the housing market after five or ten years in one place. In the housing market, moreover, the number of individual sellers is more nearly equal to the number of individual buyers than in most markets. As property values rose, homeowners found themselves living in a rapidly appreciating asset; many began mentally to

count their potential profits, and some borrowed against the increased value. While the boom fed the worries of prospective buyers, fear of a bust nagged at prospective sellers.

The disparity between those who already owned houses and those who wanted to buy them created a sort of two-class society. Early in 1980, *Money* magazine profiled the budgets of two households, one earning \$16,500, the other \$46,500, and calculated how much their expenses had risen in 1979. These families' personal inflation rates turned out to be 6 percent for the lower-income family and 3.5 percent for the upper. Yet the Consumer Price Index at the time was registering an inflation rate of more than 12 percent. The reason for the difference was that neither family had bought a house in the preceding twelve months. Families who did—who traded in their old mortgage for a larger one at a higher interest rate—might have found their expenses rising 30 or 40 percent. Such inequities lead rapidly to a belief that the economy is both capricious and unfair. When accidents of age, location, and timing make for the difference between a relatively stable budget and a wildly fluctuating one, people tend to look on the future with timidity rather than equanimity.

BECAUSE OF INFLATION, any given household's purchasing power could fall as well as rise. This was not unprecedented, since wages themselves used to fluctuate. Between 1871 and 1880, machinists' wages fell from \$2.72 to \$2.45 a day; between 1921 and 1926, coal miners' wages dropped from 85¢ to 72¢ an hour. In the early 1930s, nearly everyone's wages fell. After World War II, however—thanks partly to the growth of unions—a company might lay off its workers when business was bad, but it would seldom cut their wages. Thus family incomes almost never fell except when a wage earner lost his or her job.

Inflation changed that. When prices rise, wages must rise too, if a family's real income is to be maintained. But wages rarely go up automatically. They may be pulled up by labor shortages (as computer engineers' salaries have in recent years); or, more commonly, they may be pushed up by strong unions. In his book *Inequality in an Age of Decline*, the sociologist Paul Blumberg, of Queens College, calculated average annual incomes (corrected for inflation)

between 1967 and 1978 for workers in a variety of occupations ranging from police officer to college professor. At the top of the list—those who had the most real gains in that period—were steelworkers, coal miners, automobile workers, and truck drivers. The unions responsible for the gains of all four occupations are readily recognizable.

Union-won wage gains are no guarantee of a rising income, however, since unions cannot guarantee employment. Teachers in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, are among the best-paid educators in a state whose teachers are generally well-paid: a classroom teacher with a master's degree and eleven years of experience earns nearly \$25,000. The generous wage scales are attributable in large measure to the influence of a strong union, the Cambridge Teachers Association. Yet the city has been reeling during the past year from the effects of Massachusetts's taxpayers' revolt, incarnated in a property-tax limitation amendment known as Proposition 2½. As a result, about one sixth of the school system's teachers have lost their jobs. The same thing has happened elsewhere, in government and in industry. As the economist Paul A. London pointed out not long ago, the substantial wage gains enjoyed by unionized workers in the steel, auto, and railroad industries have been accompanied by employment cuts in those industries. Thus wage increases are paid in part by those who lose their jobs.

Employees without a union (or with a weak one) are subject to the laws of supply and demand, tempered by the employer's interest in keeping a happy work force. College professors, by Blumberg's calculations, saw their incomes after inflation fall between 7 and 10 percent during the period 1967–1978. Economists are fond of pointing out the supply-and-demand realities behind this decline: a glut of Ph.D.s trained in the 1960s and shrinking enrollments faced by many colleges. But it is doubtful that, in a period of stable prices, institutions would actually hand out wage cuts; more likely they would simply ask faculty members to forgo raises. In a period of rising prices, the job of cutting wages is done for them by inflation.

Short of belonging to a strong union (and maintaining plenty of seniority), the best way to beat the income odds has been to belong to a two-earner family. In 1979, the last year for which full

income figures are available, families with two incomes enjoyed a mean income of \$27,670, or nearly half again as much as the overall mean of \$19,620. By contrast, the average income for families with no man present was roughly \$10,000. The trouble with this strategy, of course, is that it too is chancy. In 1970 there were 47 divorced people for every 1,000 married people living together. By 1980 that figure had risen to 100. The divorce rate increased among black and white, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, and it increased in every state in the union. Divorce almost always leaves both partners with a substantial drop in income. Once divorced, to be sure, both partners are likely to remarry, though men are more likely to do so than women. But child support and alimony may remain factors in the new family's budget, and neither partner is likely to take the stability of marriage for granted.

All these developments made the economy in the 1970s look something like a lottery, in which success seemed to depend more on luck than on hard work, education, and the other traditional economic virtues. They also created a sort of economic paranoia. As important as a respectable paycheck is the knowledge that the paycheck will be there next week, and that it will keep up with rising prices. Only a lucky few enjoyed such peace of mind. Wage rates were hostage to inflation, and employment patterns were hostage to wage rates. In a world where OPEC quadrupled oil prices, where both Chrysler and New York City faced bankruptcy, and where the couple next door split up and had to sell the house, very little could be deemed safe.

The belief that the economy has been in a crisis for many years has its roots precisely in this uncertainty. On the whole, the economy hasn't been doing so badly, at least until quite recently. But traditional expectations have been disrupted, and inflation has created a sort of slippery slope, where we have to keep climbing just to stay in the same place. In this context, the news that things aren't as bad as we thought they were is small consolation—particularly when we have no way of knowing how bad they'll be tomorrow.

—John Case

John Case is the author of Understanding Inflation.

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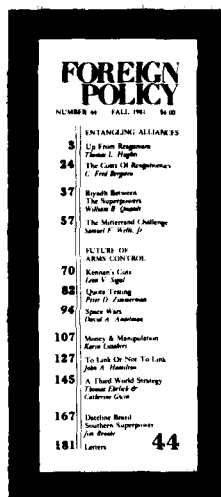
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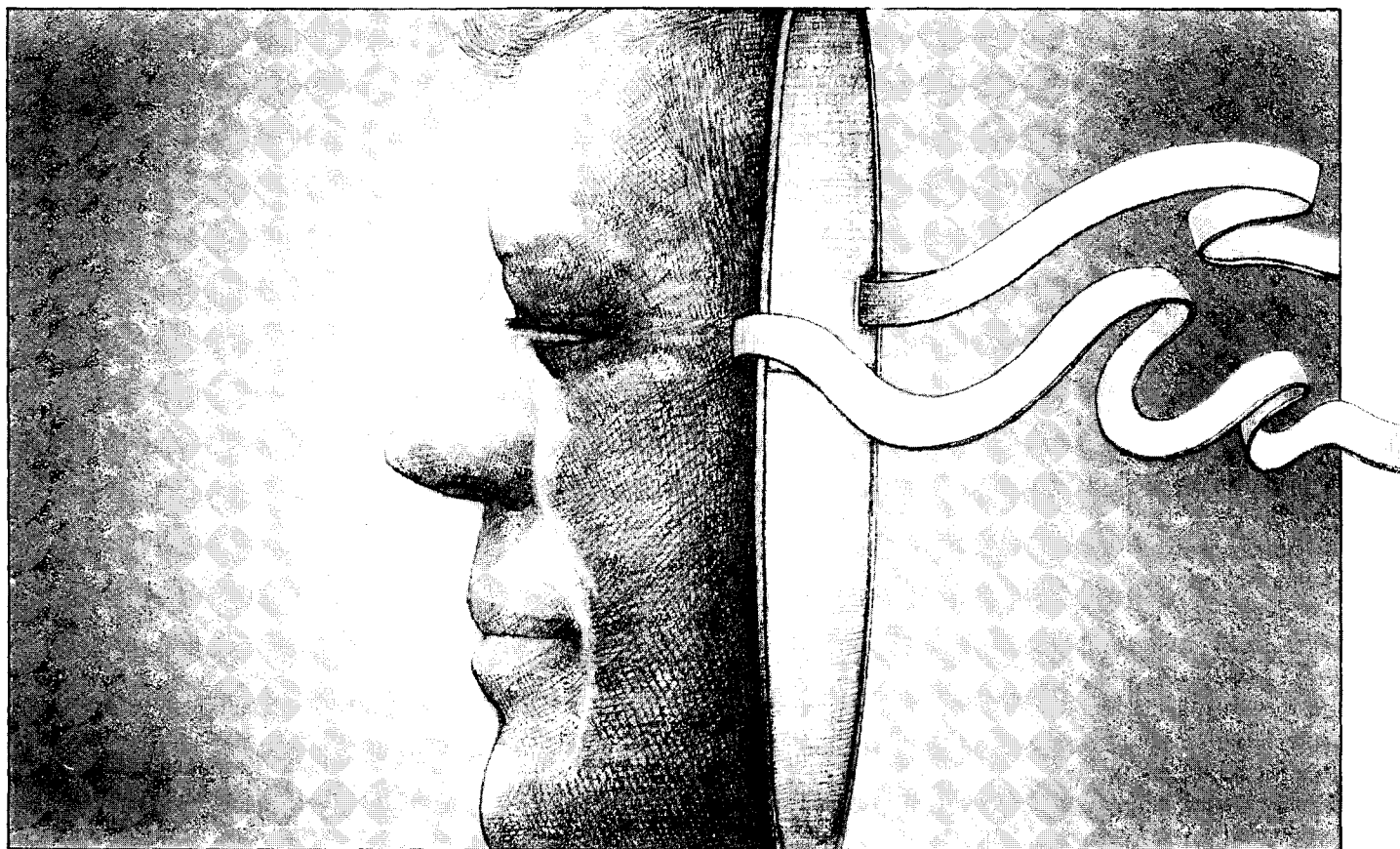


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THE KENNEDY IMPRISONMENT

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BY GARRY WILLS

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S CRIME, IN THE EYES OF many of his critics, was a government by committee. Committees are not creative. They stifle originality, impose conformity. Eisenhower had let problems go untended in order to preserve the country's (and his own) tranquillity. An "existential" leader, as Norman Mailer put it, would dare to go outside channels, to confront the unexpected with a resourceful poise of improvisation.

Arthur Schlesinger and Theodore Sorensen, official historians of John F. Kennedy's presidency, portray their leader as just the "existential" hero Mailer pined for. His first job was to dismantle the protective procedures Eisenhower had woven around the presidency. Kennedy wanted to be exposed, not shielded—out on the battlements, scanning all horizons, not seated in his chamber

sifting documents. His ideal was the Franklin Roosevelt celebrated by Schlesinger and Richard Neustadt. Neustadt's 1960 book, *Presidential Power*, became the "hot" item of the transition. In it, Roosevelt and Eisenhower were presented in sharp contrast—Roosevelt as a man free from procedural entanglements, Eisenhower as the slave of them. Kennedy, to imitate Roosevelt, had to become a sort of Eisenhower in reverse.

There would be no Sherman Adams in Kennedy's White House. The President would direct his own operation. All bottlenecks to fluidity had to be broken up. The National Security Council, for one. Under Eisenhower, this was a coordinator of information coming to the President. Kennedy meant for it to be his own arm reaching out—through, over, or around the government—to get things

done. In his book *A Thousand Days*, Schlesinger applauded the birth of what became the Vietnam-planning organ of government:

Mac [Bundy] was presently engaged in dismantling the elaborate national security apparatus built up by the Eisenhower administration Richard Neustadt had taken great pleasure during the interregnum in introducing Bundy to the Eisenhower White House as the equivalent of five officers on the Eisenhower staff. After the inauguration, Bundy promptly slaughtered committees right and left and collapsed what was left of the inherited apparatus into a compact and flexible National Security Council staff. With Walt Rostow as his deputy and Bromley Smith, a remarkable civil servant, as the NSC's secretary, he was shaping a supple instrument to meet the new President's distinctive needs.

A pattern was being set, by which the President's special teams actively took on an adversary role toward the rest of the executive branch.

Kennedy's appointments reflected his sense of priorities. Dean Rusk, a southern gentleman acclimated to eastern-establishment ways as head of the Rockefeller Foundation, would be custodian of the State Department's traditional duties toward other countries. But McGeorge Bundy would supply the ideas on foreign policy, from his office in the White House. Schlesinger felt that Washington could pose no difficulty too great for a man who had been king of the hill in Cambridge: "Bundy possessed dazzling clarity and speed of mind—Kennedy told friends that, next to David Ormsby Gore, Bundy was the brightest man he had ever known—as well as great distinction of manner and unlimited self-confidence. I had seen him learn how to dominate the faculty of Harvard University, a throng of intelligent and temperamental men; after that training, one could hardly doubt his capacity to deal with Washington bureaucrats." It is an interesting psychological point—and typical of the time—that Schlesinger considered the bureaucracy, not hostile foreign powers, the enemy to be dealt with.

Dean Rusk soon became the butt of jokes emanating from Bundy's circle of bright men at the White House. David Halberstam describes Rusk's patience during this ordeal, in *The Best and the Brightest*: "He resisted the impulse to react to stories being told about him, but at times the anger and irritation would flash through. 'It isn't worth being Secretary of State,' he once told Dick Goodwin, 'if you have a Carl Kaysen at the White House.' Substitute for the name Kaysen the name Bundy." Rusk, it was said with condescension, actually liked to attend meetings. It was a point of pride at the White House not

to hold meetings. Sorensen boasts, in *Kennedy*: "Not one staff meeting was ever held, with or without the President." The few meetings the President had to call were shams: "He never altered his view that any meeting larger than necessary was less flexible, less secret and hard-hitting No decisions of importance were made at Kennedy's Cabinet meetings and few subjects of importance, particularly in foreign affairs, were ever seriously discussed. The Cabinet as a body was convened largely as a symbol, to be informed, not consulted."

Kennedy's men felt they had broken the logjam caused by Eisenhower's cumbrous way of governing. Sorensen describes Kennedy's attitude this way:

He ignored Eisenhower's farewell recommendation to create a First Secretary of the Government to oversee all foreign affairs agencies. He abandoned the practice of the Cabinet's and the National Security Council's making group decisions like corporate boards of directors. He abolished the practice of White House staff meetings and weekly Cabinet meetings. He abolished the pyramid structure of the White House staff, the Assistant President-Sherman-Adams-type job, the Staff Secretary, the Cabinet Secretariat, the NSC Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board, all of which imposed, in his view, needless paperwork and machinery between the President and his responsible officers. He abolished several dozen interdepartmental committees which specialized in group recommendations on outmoded problems. He paid little attention to organization charts and chains of command which diluted and distributed his authority. He was not interested in unanimous committee recommendations which stifled alternatives to find the lowest common denominator of compromise.

The Kennedy teams lived on the move, calling signals to each other in the thick of action—as Sorensen put it, like basketball players developing plays while the game moved on; not, like Eisenhower's people, withdrawing into football huddles after every play.

If Kennedy thought the State Department was not his to be used but an alien thing to be tamed, he was bound to feel the same way about the Defense Department. It, after all, bore much of the blame for letting a missile gap develop. Eisenhower had won the 1952 election with a promise that he would go to Korea. Kennedy had promised, in effect, that he would go to the Pentagon—and he did so in the person of Robert McNamara. A product of the Harvard Business School, McNamara had been part of a team that planned the expansion of the Air Force during World War II, a team that after the war went intact to the Ford Motor Company, where it was known as the Whiz Kids. McNamara had just become the president of Ford (the first one not to bear the family name) when Kennedy called him to Washington. This intellectual-as-manager would assert civilian control over a Pentagon in love with the giant implements of massive retaliation. And, having done that, he would be called on for advice in every area

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of the government. Sorensen describes McNamara's extraordinary impact on the President:

His own staff and subordinates ranked with Bob Kennedy's and Douglas Dillon's as the best in Washington and possibly in history In eleven years with Kennedy I never saw him develop admiration and personal regard for another man as quickly as he did with Robert McNamara, enabling the McNamaras to be excepted from the general Kennedy rule of keeping official and social friendships separate.

Lyndon Johnson would be equally impressed by McNamara's brains and discipline. For years, intelligent men remained convinced that the Vietnam War could be won because McNamara told them so, and McNamara always delivered.

A President who treated his executive branch as something to be raided, prodded, or ignored was bound to deal with Congress as an adversary. Kennedy's lackluster performance as a representative and senator derived in large part from his sense that real power lay with the executive branch (if only a non-Eisenhower would come along to energize it). Congress was, in his mind, the epitome of government by committee. Its principal power was to obstruct, to "deadlock" the system (as James MacGregor Burns argued in *The Deadlock of Democracy*, an influential book of the period). A strong President was needed to use all his power against the recalcitrant legislative branch.

The President decided early to take on the committee system at its strongest node—that obstacle to all legislation, "Judge" Howard Smith's House Rules Committee. Kennedy packed the committee, with Speaker Sam Rayburn's help, but it was a pyrrhic victory. "It was a close and bitter business," Schlesinger admits, "and the memory of this fight laid a restraining hand on the administration's legislative priorities for some time to come." This assertion of power had drained power away—something that did not fit the Neustadt conception of power; but the lesson was lost on Kennedy.

Instead, Kennedy concluded that if outright confrontation failed, circumvention of the process must be relied on—executive orders instead of legislation, extensions of authority for the team players, isolation of the less responsive parts of government. Let the uncooperative agencies atrophy, while a few vigorous men took on more and more general tasks. Sorensen describes the process: "It was largely through the President's confidence in McNamara's competence that the Department of Defense began to play a far greater role in areas in which other agencies were concerned: civil defense, space, intelligence, paramilitary operations, foreign aid and foreign policy in general." A small band of like-minded men, in conferences that were "flexible, secret, and hard-hitting," might save the sluggish democracy despite itself. This vision of a "happy band of brothers" came straight from the

pages of John Buchan, a British author Kennedy admired. Kennedy's fascination with counterinsurgency in other countries is well known. More important is the extent to which he viewed his own administration as a raid of mobile "outsiders" on the settled government of America. He had assembled a hit-and-run team to cut through enemy resistance, go outside channels, forgo meetings, subvert committees, and dismantle structures.

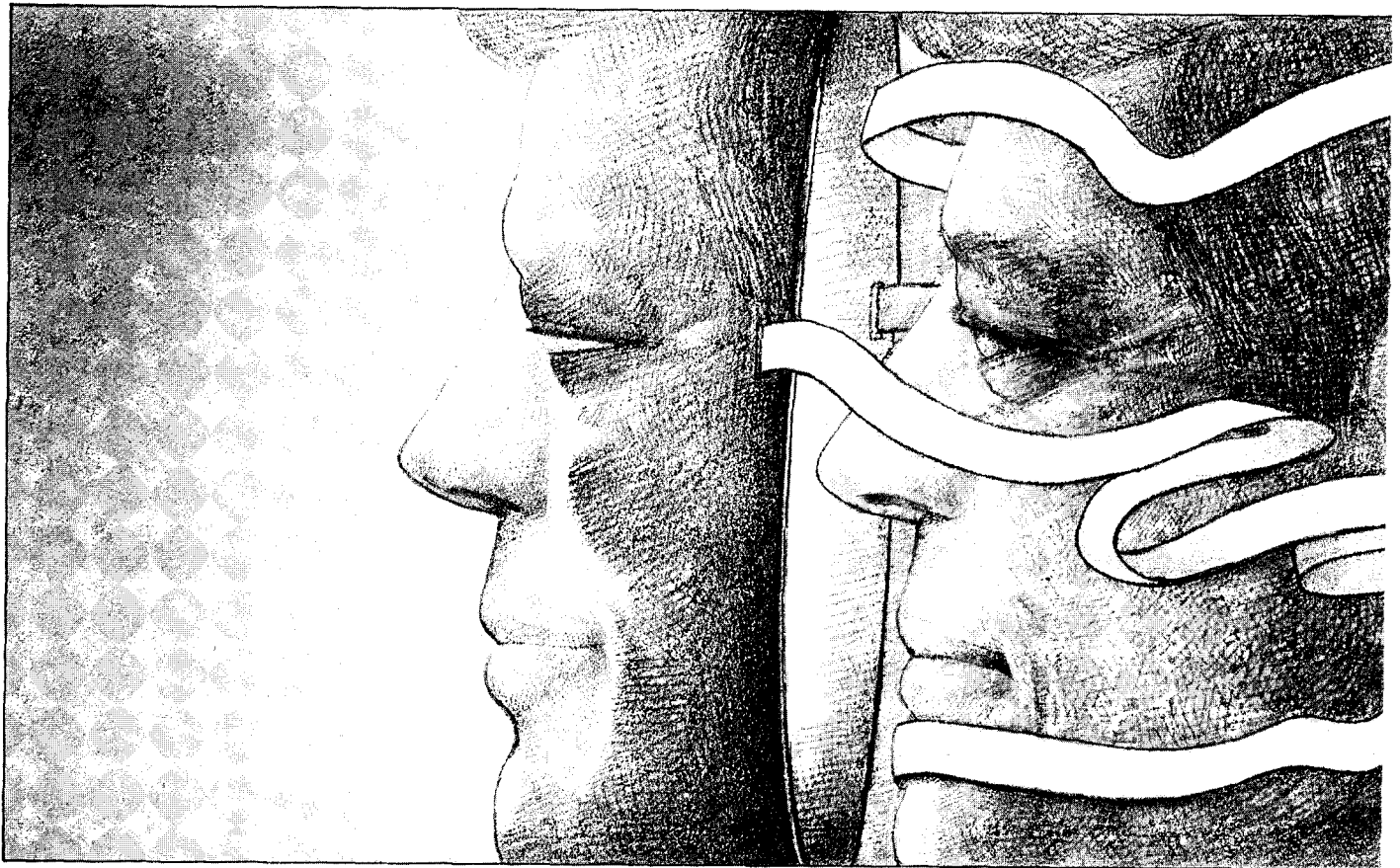
Kennedy had been encouraged by his father to despise professional diplomats. As ambassador to the Court of St. James's, Joseph Kennedy mocked the "striped-pants set," and carved his way to a controversial independence in England—hoping to save his country from war, to shock those at home with the hard facts of England's demise. Cutting through "crap" came naturally to the man who was a loner in the business world, at odds with his fellow entrepreneurs' corporate routines. Both father and son believed in inspired amateurs, in the gentleman saviors of their country.

As President, Kennedy conveyed his lack of respect for the State Department in many ways, once calling it "a bowl of jelly." By 1978, Schlesinger had come to see some flaws in this contemptuous attitude. He wrote, in *Robert Kennedy and His Times*:

The Kennedys had a romantic view of the possibilities of diplomacy. They wanted to replace protocol-minded, striped-pants officials by reform-minded missionaries of democracy who mixed with the people, spoke the native dialects, ate the food, and involved themselves in local struggles against ignorance and want. This view had its most genial expression in the Peace Corps, its most corrupt in the mystique of counterinsurgency. The gospel of activism became the New Frontier's challenge to the cautious, painstaking, spectatorial methods of the old diplomacy.

Abroad, counterinsurgency meant that a regime such as Diem's could not fight off insurgents alone; it was too mired in the past, too crippled by old compromises with France. But a team without such ties, a fresh force with clean hands, could purge and reform the administration while propping it up. It could fend off insurgents and alter the Vietnamese establishment. The assignment at home was not very different. In order to get the country "moving again," as Kennedy's campaign slogan had it, to make it clean and tough enough to confront the Russians, crisis teams would have to save the bureaucracy from itself, take over its duties, and force it to join the successful operation of the outsiders. Henry Fairlie rightly called this a vision of "guerrilla government."

That ideal gives deeper meaning to a term that became popular in and around the Kennedy presidency. James David Barber claims that "charisma" was "a pawed-over concept Kennedy brought back to clarity." But that was hardly the case. Kennedy's admirers stretched and cheapened the sociological term adopted, half a century earlier, by Max Weber. Yet there was an unnoticed justice in the

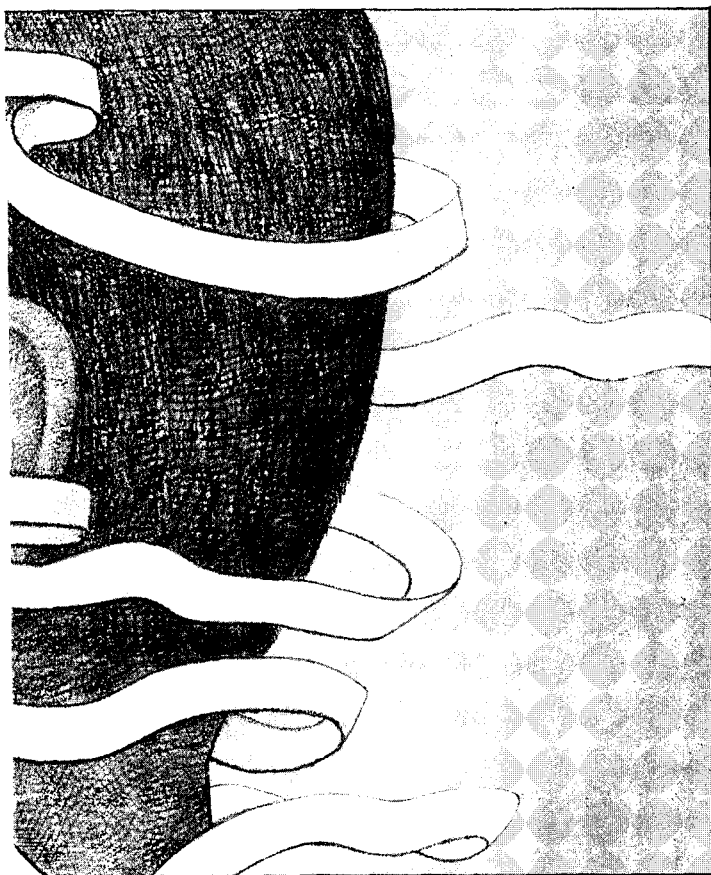


application of this word to the New Frontier. Weber distinguished three kinds of authority—traditional, relying on the inertia of sacred custom; legal, based on contractual ties; and charismatic, based on the special gifts of a single ruler. Charismatic leadership is transitory—the “grace” is attached to one person, who must constantly revalidate it in action (“existentially,” according to the sixties jargon). It serves, amid the collapse of order or old ways, to bind together a new effort—the embodiment of a cause in George Washington or Mao Tse-tung. The founders of states, or of religious orders (a favorite Weber illustration), have to exert *personal* authority, since they have no pre-existing majesty of office or sanction of law to draw upon.

Kennedy’s personalized leadership consciously distanced itself from the “traditional” father-king role of Eisenhower and the “legal” order of bureaucratic committees. Power came from Kennedy’s person, according to Schlesinger. It had to be displayed, deployed, brought to bear. His “cool” was his program, style and vigor his credentials. Kennedy’s term in office was later studied as just one more stage in the development of an imperial presidency. But his followers saw it as a radical break with the institutional passivity of the post-Roosevelt presidency. They were returning to the last President who had been charismatic in Weber’s sense. Franklin Roosevelt, given special powers to deal with the crisis of the Depression, broke free of tradition, defied the two-term rule, took on

himself the sacred mantle of war leader, and made policy by sheer personal fiat. Aspiring to a Rooseveltian presidency, Kennedy hoped, without the benefit of depression or war, to assume emergency powers and assert a ruling charisma.

Sorensen’s account of the administration is gleefully crisis-oriented. He admiringly counts fifteen of them in Kennedy’s first eight months as President. The atmosphere is perfectly caught by Halberstam: Kennedy bequeathed to Johnson “crisis-mentality men, men who delighted in the great international crisis because it centered the action right there in the White House—the meetings, the decisions, the tensions, the power, *they* were movers and activists, and this was what they had come to Washington for, to meet these challenges.” Kennedy had come to office sounding the alarm over a missile-gap crisis—as he had sounded the alarm in 1940 over England’s airplane-gap crisis at the beginning of World War II. (A.J.P. Taylor has demonstrated that the first gap was no more real than the later one.) In his inaugural address, he asked the nation to welcome “the role of defending freedom at its maximum hour of danger.” In his first State of the Union address, he said: “Before my term has ended we shall have to test anew whether a nation organized and governed such as ours can endure. The outcome is by no means certain.” To convey a sense of crisis over Cuba, he risked alerting Castro to the Bay of Pigs invasion by saying, in a TV interview just before the landing: “If we don’t move



now, Mr. Castro may become a much greater danger than he is to us today." He tried to "jolt the democracy" (as his 1940 book recommended) by calling up the specter of a civil-defense gap. Sorensen admits that Kennedy was just trying to lend urgency to the Berlin crisis: "The President's aim was to bestir a still slumbering public; and he succeeded beyond his own expectations and desire." Debate over who would be saved in the bomb shelters became hysterical, with talk of shooting neighbors who tried to crowd in. Sorensen: "The confusion and panic were aggravated by the Kennedy administration's lack of a comprehensive shelter program, a clear-cut shelter policy or even an authoritative voice placing the whole problem in perspective." Kennedy meant to frighten people a little so they would flock toward him. Since the charismatic leader's special powers grow from special dangers, the two feed on each other. For some crises to be overcome, they must first be created.

Many people have noticed the way Kennedy, without being radical himself, seemed to inspire a wave of radical action, from the Freedom Rides to the free-speech movement. He sent out young people in the Peace Corps to be missionaries for American values; but many seemed to catch the values of the countries they went to. This was not his intent; but the very act of sending them out was radicalizing—it was adventurous, and it reflected the contemptuous attitude Kennedy's people had for older means of diplomatic suasion and propaganda. Insofar as the char-

ismatic leader asserts an entirely personal authority, he *delegitimizes* the traditional and legal authorities. Attempting to prop up the Saigon regime, Kennedy's ambassadors to Vietnam and advisers actually called its slim claims further into question. And the same was true, in less degree, of the bureaus and agencies at home. While deferring to the FBI himself, Attorney General Robert Kennedy made clear to others that it could not be relied on for the protection of civil-rights workers. While expressing formal regard for "Secretary Rusk" (never, even in private, was it "Dean"), the President made clear his slight regard for the State Department. By relying on a few "generalists," Kennedy signaled the lack of authority in most branches of his administration.

Charismatic authority is constructive only when it builds order from chaos. When it tries to supersede continuing forms of authority, it destabilizes despite itself. The more insistent Kennedy's personal call to follow him became, the less compelling was any order that did not issue directly from him. As Hugh Sidey wrote of Kennedy, in his 1963 book, *John F. Kennedy, President*: "He wanted all the lines to lead to the White House, he wanted to be the single nerve center." And when he could not act personally, he had to do so through a personal emissary created ad hoc, not through official, impersonal machinery. The creation of "honorary Kennedys" was thus an instrument of rule, not only in the Justice Department but in the White House. In order to speak for the "graced" ruler one must, in some measure, *be* the ruler, be merged in his aureole. Sorensen rejoiced in being thought of as Kennedy's alter ego; others tried to win that distinction.

Though the nation's economy was less porous to Kennedy's guerrilla raids than was the bureaucracy, his model for political action was the jolly piratical creed of his predator father. When the Cubans captured at the Bay of Pigs needed ransom money, Robert Kennedy went outside governmental channels and used family charisma to raise private funds. He did the same thing, as senator, in setting up his own social program for the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of New York City. These "raids" for political action and advantage were privately financed—like the Kennedy campaign itself, for which the elder Kennedy bought his son his very own airplane, the *Caroline*.

When John Kennedy reached the White House, his father retired gracefully into the background. Schlesinger and others saw in this a demonstration that all fears of his father's influence were groundless. But the father did not have to speak or be present to have an effect on the President. Joseph Kennedy had labored to create a separate world for his family, an aristocracy floating free of lesser ties, where image and power would be controllable and resources instantly available for the family's advantage. John Kennedy, by his personalization of the authority of the President, simply drew up the United States government—or as much of it as could be lifted—into that encapsulated world of charmed Kennedy power, of charisma.

THE PRESIDENCY OF DWIGHT EISENHOWER WAS SUCH an ordeal for American liberals because they had been excited by the prospect of having Adlai Stevenson in office. Stevenson was the first presidential candidate to promise intellectuals the sense of belonging that they came to experience, at last, with Kennedy. In fact, it was a profound mystery to most intellectuals that the American people had been able to reject their hero in 1952. This so disillusioned Murray Kempton that he swore never to vote again in a presidential election. The idea that the "best man" could win in that forum was dashed forever in the anguish of Adlai's loss. John Kenneth Galbraith writes of that election, in *A Life in Our Times*: "It would be hard for the young to understand not only our surprise but our shock at the outcome. . . . we learned that the natural order had come to an end."

For such people, the choice of Eisenhower over Stevenson was an affront to reason sufficient to shake one's faith in democracy. If the people could be so manifestly wrong, maybe they were incapable of self-government after all. McCarthyism had been scary enough—for a while the senator from Wisconsin had commanded majority support in the polls. But the passing sway of a demagogue could be weathered. Eisenhower posed a more serious problem. He was not a demagogue, in the Neustadt view of things; just a dope. But dopes, if they last in government, may be even more serious threats to democratic values than impassioned fanatics who quickly burn themselves out. Not only do dopes have personal durability; under their prolonged sway, the nation can lapse into narcolepsy and let all its problems breed in the darkness.

For John Kennedy, who had taken his view of democracy from John Buchan, the choice of Eisenhower was no mystery. He knew, and had written in *Why England Slept*, that democracies like to take the easy way, to avoid looking at problems until it is too late. That is why they need strong leaders willing to administer timely jolts to the people as a form of therapy. But this did not fit well with an older American liberalism, which feared power and trusted the people—the liberalism for which Adlai Stevenson spoke when he asked that the "cup" of power pass him by. Friends of Kennedy's laughed at the mere idea of his asking to be spared the cup of power.

Presidential Power signified the willingness of American liberals to confess that the older liberalism could not cope and must be jettisoned. There should be an "end of ideology," in the name of "existential" leaders—Schlesinger cited Hemingway and Camus—for whom "authenticity" in action was the test. Neustadt's Roosevelt was seen through such postwar filters of existential leadership. He was a manipulative man, a tough pragmatist who did not go by the rules but imposed his will. There would be no more talk of fearing power. The brave man must take up power as a joyful encounter with reality. The failure to do that was, in fact, Eisenhower's greatest flaw, according to Neustadt:

Eisenhower also lacked Roosevelt's enjoyment. At least until his seventh year the politics of power in the Presidency never was his sport; not recreation for him; certainly not fun What kept experience from sharpening his sense of power and his taste for it? . . . He wanted to be arbiter, not master. His love was not for power but for duty and for status.

The mood of the time can be seen in the fact that the very terms Neustadt used to criticize Eisenhower would once have been terms of praise. And that fact becomes more interesting when we realize that every criticism directed at Eisenhower could be directed at Adlai Stevenson. Stevenson was even *less* the jolly warrior, the master manipulator, the seizer and user of power. Truman had called him a "Hamlet." The Kennedy people learned to despise him for wanting things he would not openly work to win. They mistreated him and he came back for more. In moving from Stevenson to Kennedy, liberals had not—as Eleanor Roosevelt feared—given up their principles; they had finally seen the solution to the Eisenhower problem. They had gone back to the true sense of power, exemplified, they thought, by Mrs. Roosevelt's husband.

Neustadt's was just the first in a series of books that told Presidents they must, above all else, love power and seek it with unbounded gusto. The theme of them all was "Enjoy! Enjoy!" Neustadt led off:

Roosevelt's methods were the product of his insights, his incentives and his confidence. No President in this century has had a sharper sense of personal power, a sense of what it is and where it comes from; none has had more hunger for it, few have had more use for it, and only one or two could match his faith in his own competence to use it. Perception and desire and self-confidence, combined, produced their own reward. No modern President has been more nearly master in the White House. Roosevelt had a love affair with power in that place. It was an early romance and it lasted all his life. . . . For Roosevelt, this was fun.

From now on, having fun in the White House would be a presidential task. Lack of enjoyment was of itself a disqualification for office. Vigor could emanate only from the President's own appetite for the life of power: "The more determinedly a President seeks power, the more he will be likely to bring vigor to his clerkship. As he does so he contributes to the energy of government." A long literature of common sense had taught men to suspect power and the men who thirst for it. Now that literature would be turned on its head. The man who was suspect would be the one who showed any suspicion of power and its uses. The old view had been discredited in the deadening Eisenhower days. Neustadt said, "His virtue was supposed to be that he was above politics, and disenchantment with him rarely seems a disenchantment with this odd criterion. Instead it is all Eisenhower's fault that he is not what temperament and training never equipped him to be."

Needless to say, the official Kennedy literature is drearily joyful in repeating how much fun Kennedy had being President. Schlesinger sang along: "Not since Franklin Roosevelt had there been a President who so plainly delighted in innovation and leadership." Sorensen, too: "John F. Kennedy was a happy president . . . He liked the job, he thrived on its pressures."

Since it was a President's duty to seek all the power he could get, and our duty to choose men with this appetite, it was clearly our duty to relinquish the power—to be as glad that he seized it as he was in the act of seizure. The President ennobled us by instilling awe for his office. Sorensen put this creation of awe among the great human achievements of all time:

One of John Kennedy's most important contributions to the human spirit was his concept of the office of the Presidency. His philosophy of government was keyed to power, not as a matter of personal ambition but of national obligation: the primacy of the White House within the Executive Branch and of the Executive Branch within the Federal Government, the leadership of the Federal Government within the United States and of the United States within the community of nations.

The founders of this nation would have been surprised to hear that executive supremacy is a noble cause; and other nations might wonder at the elevation of American power over all other countries as a contribution to the human spirit. But I suppose we are lucky Sorensen did not make his pyramid of power—America over all, the executive over America, the President over the executive—culminate in the title he celebrated while writing Kennedy's campaign speeches: the Commander-in-Chief. During the Watergate days, Alexander Haig was mocked for telling William Ruckelshaus, in the special prosecutor's office, that his Commander-in-Chief had given him an order. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, not of the citizenry at large. But in his 1960 campaign, Kennedy had assured us that the American people yearn for leadership: "They want to know what is needed—they want to be led by their Commander-in-Chief." And the President was the Commander-in-Chief not only of all American people but of the whole free world—he must be "a man capable of acting as the Commander-in-Chief of the grand alliance." Hugh Sidey significantly called his chapter in *John F. Kennedy, President* on counterinsurgent warfare in other countries "Commander in Chief."

Needless to say, the Constitution did not set up military titles for foreigners to obey. But Kennedy-Sorensen was convinced that all the world's free people yearned for a leader who enjoyed the widest powers he could lay claim to. Thus was "the human spirit" itself vindicated.

The new awe for the presidential role rubbed off on the President's very working space. Sorensen wrote:

The whole White House crackled with excitement under John Kennedy, but the soundproof oval office, the very center and stimulant of all the action, symbolized his own peace of mind. The tall French windows opened onto the completely renovated flower garden of which he was inordinately proud. Even on gloomy days the light pouring in through those windows on the blue rug and freshly painted cream-colored walls bathed his ash splint rocking chair and two beige couches, brought in for more friendly talks, in a quiet glow.

Breathless description of that office became a set piece in post-Kennedy hymns to the presidency. Hugh Sidey called the last chapter of *John F. Kennedy, President* "The Oval Office":

There was an awesome presence in that Oval Chamber which was then quiet, cool, sunlit—the very heart of his nation's meaning, the very core of freedom, thirty-five feet long by twenty-eight feet, four inches wide. To an outsider the feeling of awe is always there—any man who walks into that office senses it. I wondered if the President ever got used to it, and then I decided that he never does either.

The office itself was now a superhuman dwelling place, as Theodore White made embarrassingly clear in his genuflections at the shrine in *The Making of the President 1960*: "For the laws of Congress cannot define, nor can custom anticipate, the unknown—and this is where the great Presidents must live, *observant of the law yet beyond the law, Chief Executive and High Priest of American life at once.*" (Italics added)

Charisma, in the Weberian sense, is not transferable—even to members of the "graced" leader's own family. But later Presidents would be measured by the expectations Kennedy raised. He did not so much elevate the office as cripple those who held it after him. His legend has haunted them; his light has cast them in shadow.

"CAMELOT" ENDED IN NOVEMBER OF 1963, BUT ITS effects were just beginning to be felt. The Kennedys have been a presence in the White House ever since, bedeviling later occupants. Charisma, the uniquely *personal* power, delegitimizes *institutions*. Rule by dazzlement cannot be succeeded by mere constitutional procedure.

No sooner was President Kennedy dead than his followers began to think and speak of a restoration. Lyndon Johnson was at best an interlude, at worst a usurper—intrusive, in any case; out of the proper order of things. The loonier left tried to involve Johnson in the assassination itself. Others more vaguely blamed Texas for the President's death, and made the Texan successor guilty by association. For some, Johnson had murdered, if nothing else, a style. For William Manchester, it was an abomination to have a vulgarian inside that magic egg of blinding whiteness, John Kennedy's Oval Office.

Awareness of these criticisms dulled the political instincts of Lyndon Johnson. A man as large as Paul Bunyan in the Senate was pre-shrunk in a White House where Kennedy aides snickered at him. And even when he came to power, he could take no revenge upon them. In fact, he had to woo them, ask for their help, try to maintain a continuity of authority. And the more he tried to do this, the less could he be his own uninhibited self. His salty style had to be toned down. He tried to assume an alien dignity, which came across on TV as acute discomfort. His insecurities were exposed by this situation as by no other. George Ball rightly observed of Johnson, ringed by Kennedy's Rhodes Scholars, that he suffered not from the lack of a good education but from his sense of lacking a good education.

The true wound inflicted on Johnson was not that the Kennedys considered him a usurper but that they managed, in time, to make him feel like one. The Kennedys, he complained, would never let him rule in his own right. The more he deferred to them, the more they made his White House theirs, even before he had left it. This odd struggle between two shadow-Presidents reached its climax in 1966, when Robert Kennedy returned from a Paris meeting with peace negotiators. A garbled leak had the senator from New York carrying on negotiations for the United States. When Kennedy visited Johnson, he was attacked for releasing such a story. "I think the leak came from someone in your State Department," Robert told the President. "It's not *my* State Department, God damn it," Johnson thundered at him. "It's *your* State Department."

Johnson was President in name only, or President only for taking blame. All the credit for his initiatives in civil rights or the poverty program seemed to go to the Kennedys. He was President only over things that went wrong. No wonder he confided to Doris Kearns:

It would have been hard on me to watch Bobby march to "Hail to the Chief," but I almost wish he had become President so the country could finally see a flesh-and-blood Kennedy grappling with the daily work of the Presidency and all the inevitable disappointments, instead of their storybook image of great heroes who, because they were dead, could make anything anyone wanted happen.

The impact of "Camelot" on what followed was profound; but I think it has often been misunderstood, or inadequately stated, because of the trivialization of the word "charisma" during the sixties. It is said that Johnson's problem was his lack of charisma as mere glamour, mere sophisticated ease of manner; that John Kennedy had created an appetite for such points of style and Johnson could not satisfy that yearning; that the New Frontier had inflated expectations of the presidential office in a way that enabled Johnson to launch ambitious programs without having the flair to bring them off. But if we take

charisma in its sociological sense, of a *personal* rule pitted against traditional and legal procedures, Johnson was forced to take up a charismatic role. He could not rest in the office he held on such tenuous terms, in a government establishment that he felt was disloyal to him. He tried to use his Senate skills and a few cronies to conduct his own kind of "guerrilla government," defiant of Georgetown, the press, the bureaucracy. He reverted to Texas hyperbole and a personal war waged from his ranch as much as from the White House: "Son," he told a military aide gesturing toward his presidential helicopter at an Army camp, "they are *all* my helicopters." Vietnam was *his* war, waged almost as much against its critics at home—even those in his own government—as against the far-off, shadowy enemy. The real impact of Kennedy on his successors was not so much an inflation of the office they succeeded to but the doomed way they imitated his attempt to rule *against* the government. Inheriting a delegitimated set of procedures, they, too, were compelled to go outside the procedures—further delegitimizing the very office they held.

This was most apparent in the administration of Richard Nixon. Narrowly defeated by Kennedy in 1960, Nixon was mesmerized by Kennedys. Even during that first race, Nixon's attacks on Kennedy seemed half-envious, never contemptuous. Murray Kempton observed at the time: "Mr. Nixon is cursed by the illusion that he is playing dirty with his betters." Like Johnson, Nixon felt compelled to mimic where he could not scorn—the Nixon inaugural address was slavishly imitative of Kennedy's more successful one. Yet he also felt an urgency to defile what he aspired to. As soon as he was in the White House, Nixon acquired a team of "gumshoes" to smear his foes. Their first assignment, during Nixon's first summer in office, was Chappaquiddick. Tony Ulasewicz's team was dispatched to Martha's Vineyard, not as law-enforcement officers but to dig up further scandal for Nixon's private use. The same team followed Edward Kennedy, questioned his associates, planned at one point seduction of putative "girlfriends" who might be blackmailed to inform against him. It was the sordid beginning to all Nixon's later "dirty tricks"—the break-ins, the name-blackenings, all that scurrying in back alleys to bring down the shining Kennedy name. Charles Colson, who knew what would please his master, had Howard Hunt forge cables that would link Kennedy directly to the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem. (Johnson, too, dwelt at times on the gruesomely satisfying thought that Kennedy might have assassinated another ruler just before his own assassination.) Nixon was at least as obsessed with Kennedys as Johnson had been.

And, like Johnson's, Nixon's admiring resentment of the Kennedys combined with earlier grievances against the establishment and various aspects of Washington. Nixon's service under Eisenhower had been a demeaning one. Respectable Republicans treated the Vice-President's "low-

road" tactics as a homeopathic medicine against McCarthyism's deadlier poisons. Washington circles were Nixon's feared enemies long before he reached the White House. Later, his defenders would say he resorted to private teams of lawbreakers because the official lawbreakers—the FBI, the CIA—had resisted his attempts to use them. But H.R. Haldeman hired private "investigators" just after the Inauguration—long before there was a chance for the bureaucracy to oppose his master. Nonetheless, it is fitting that Haldeman—and brighter observers as well, such as Nicholas von Hoffman—should think the CIA, which overthrew foreign governments, overthrew Nixon's as well. Nixon was governing *against* the government from the outset.

Nixon's inability to trust even his own government became a kind of blessing for the nation. He was brought down by his drive to supplement the government's illegal taps and bugs, break-ins and smear operations. He felt more embattled in office than Johnson had, a counterinsurgent President distrusted by the establishment and under siege from the counterculture. He governed from a mental foxhole, with official enemies at his back as well as hostile "kids" out front. His attitude was expressed in the odd outburst he indulged in when Charles Manson was on trial, in 1970, for the cult murder of Sharon Tate and others. Speaking extemporaneously in Denver, on the way back from his summer White House, Nixon denounced the press for glamorizing a mass murder, and contrasted this with the values in a John Wayne movie he had seen the night before (*Chisum*), in which Wayne took the law into his own hands and rid the community of undesirables.

To be a hired gun for good, to ride in and rescue where there is no sheriff—that is the outsider's dream. But Nixon was the appointed sheriff when he reveled in that dream. And he was not talking of a man who "got away with" murder. Manson had been apprehended, and was standing trial as Nixon spoke.

Nixon fascinated the press and others with his ability to reveal his fantasy life so directly. At the time he launched the Cambodian invasion, he watched the movie *Patton* several times, but not to indulge vicarious blood-thirstiness. *Patton* was not about male aggression satisfied but about the baffling of a good man's energies—and by Eisenhower! Nixon was bracing himself not with vicarious aggression but with shared rejection. He was stiffening his spine with the surest medicines for it—resentment of his critics and self-pity. Even as he wheeled vast forces of destruction to their work half a world away, he was the outsider, the despised one. The loyalty of his followers, their protectiveness, came from this vulnerability of the man hastening to hurt others because he had been so deeply hurt himself. Nixon's was called an imperial presidency; but it was a backstairs presidency. He plotted against his own throne, and brought it down. Hating John Kennedy even more than Lyndon Johnson had, he felt

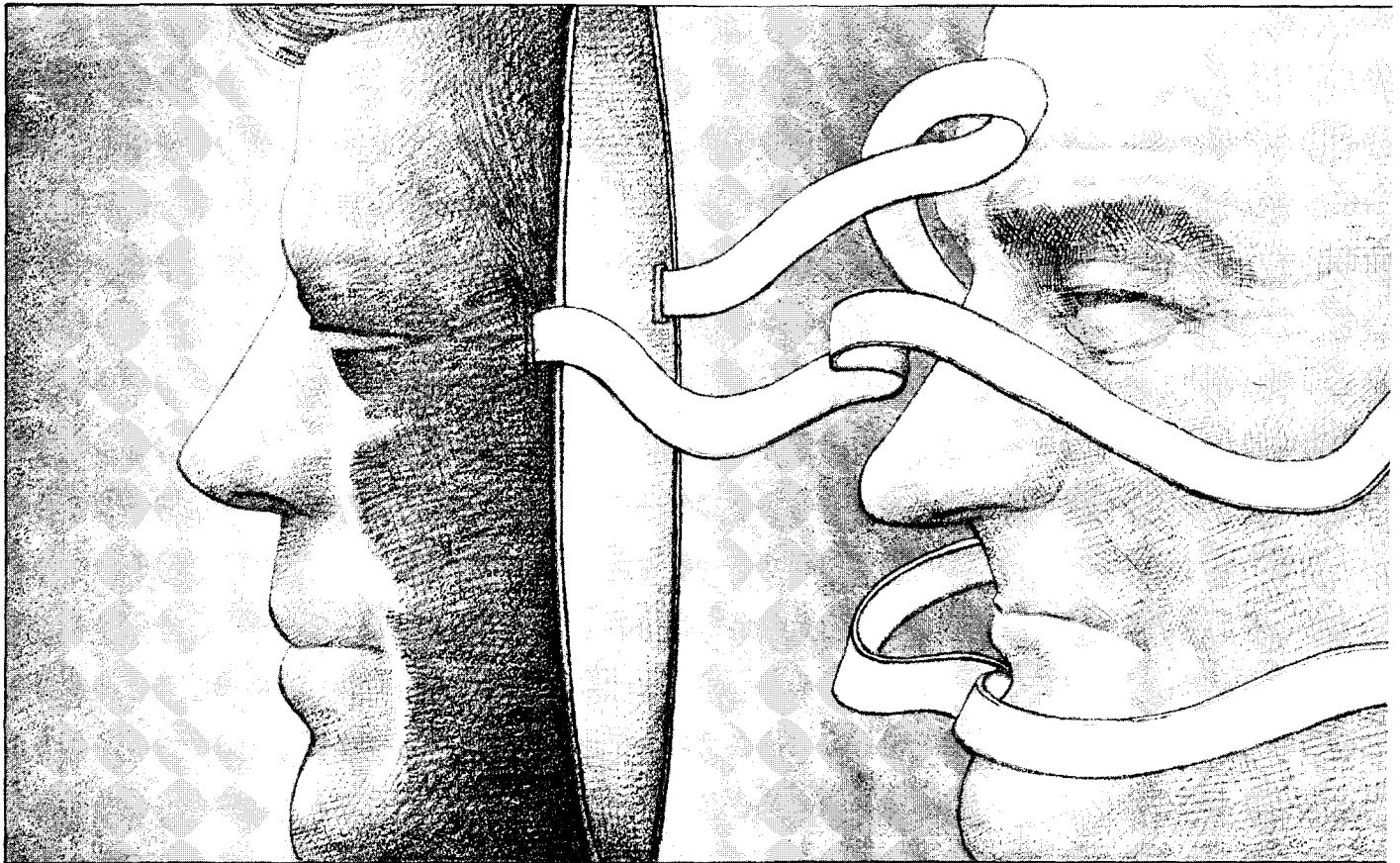
even less worthy of that man's Oval Office, and carried on a personal guerrilla campaign against the traditional and legal governments of Washington.

Gerald Ford, it is true, did not seem obsessed with the golden family. But the acting president for foreign affairs during Ford's administration, Henry Kissinger, had been rejected by his Harvard peers of Camelot, and adopted many of Nixon's devices of secret government—tapping his underlings, leaking, manipulating the press, governing *against* the State Department from the White House, and making a purely personal reign when he went over to State. He believed in "back channels," and resented the bureaucracy.

Jimmy Carter ran more openly "against Washington" than any candidate before Ronald Reagan. Once he arrived at the summit, he could not let himself be contaminated by close relations with the rest of his administration. Hoping to bestow decency on the presidential office from his own store of personal integrity, he forswore the trappings of office, and asked to be thought of as President *Carter*, not *President* Carter. He was insistent on his personal concern, outrunning mere obligations of position. He encouraged people to think that one could be a good man only by keeping his personal characteristics daintily aloof from the dirtied center of power.

In fashioning a charismatic countergovernment, Carter absorbed the State Department not only into the White House but into his own person. Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin were invited to Camp David, where the President shuttled back and forth between them, praying with each, assuring them that he loved them. The Camp David accords were hatched in his very own nest, under his warming breast. When Carter could not go to others in person, he sent surrogates, friends who would express his esteem—Andrew Young to African nations, Rosalynn Carter to speak Spanish to Latinos, Hamilton Jordan to meet with Omar Torrijos about the Panama Canal treaties or talk with Sadegh Ghotbzadeh about the hostages in Iran. Like other critics of the bureaucracy, Carter tended to *add* special envoys or experts to the "useless" machinery—a new office for Alfred Kahn to cope with inflation, a special Mideast mission for Sol Linowitz. And, all the while, distrust of official Washington led to disproportionate reliance on a "Georgia Mafia"—Charles Kirbo, Bertram Lance, Hamilton Jordan, Jody Powell—whose only credentials were their proximity to Carter and their total dedication to him.

Like other charismatic leaders, Carter found crisis necessary to enhance "emergency" powers. When he sank to a record low in public-opinion polls during the summer of 1979, he withdrew into a ten-day retreat at Camp David, canceling speeches and summoning spiritual as well as political leaders to meetings shrouded in mystery. When he came down from the mountain, it was to proclaim a national affliction with "malaise," a moral and spiritual "crisis of confidence," for which the solution was announced:



"We simply must have faith in each other." This meant: Have faith in me to lead you out of this newly discovered darkness.

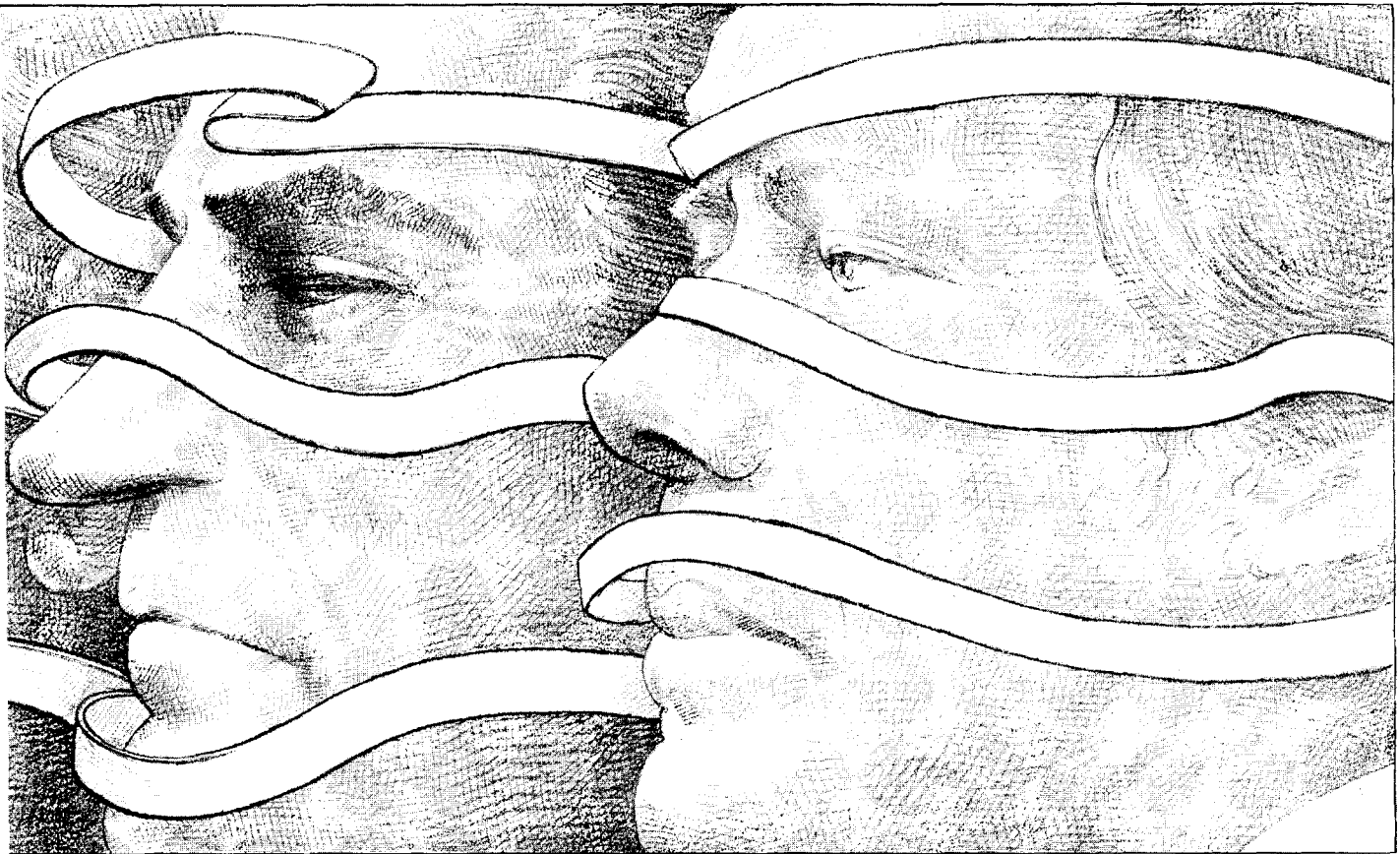
It didn't work. The machinery for cranking up the artificial crisis was too visible. Carter's real problem was too obviously his own slippage. The polls continued to be unfavorable, and Edward Kennedy entered the race. But then national trouble became a political blessing. The capture of the diplomats in Iran gave Carter a real crisis—one he nurtured for months, exploiting it all through the primary season, fashioning a "Rose Garden strategy" that kept him off the campaign trail tending a crisis too dangerous to be left alone for a single minute. If this mood could have been sustained for a whole year, Carter might have been re-elected on the strength of it. But as urgency was dissipated, month after month, so were Carter's powers.

Like other successors to John Kennedy, Carter fashioned his charismatic presidency as a fearful attack on the former President's family. During the 1976 campaign he boasted that he did not have to "kiss Kennedy's ass" in order to win. Once in office, Carter showed no favor toward one of the most powerful senators of his own party. On the contrary, he failed to consult him, gratuitously insulted him by omission (e.g., from the first invitations to a party at the Kennedy Center for representatives of the People's Republic of China), treated with suspicion such friends of his as Joseph Califano, and made sure that the newspa-

pers carried his boast, on the day after Kennedy announced his health plan, that he would "whip his ass" if Kennedy ran in 1980. It would have been easy for Carter to forestall any Kennedy race that year, simply by recruiting him to his administration's efforts early on. But he sought an opportunity for defeating Kennedy. Presidents after John F. Kennedy have not considered themselves fully legitimate until they have proved they can deal with the heir presumptive.

Perhaps Ronald Reagan has broken the Kennedy spell over the White House—he awarded the medal Congress had struck in Robert Kennedy's honor and President Carter had "sat on." Of course, Reagan won in a year when Edward Kennedy finally did run. And he was not awed by the fake-Hollywood glamour of the Kennedys—he is (as they say) "real tinsel." Also, as the last of the Roosevelt-era politicians to win the presidency, he had a very different view of Neustadt's and Schlesinger's hero. His political views were formed before "Camelot" occurred. Though he has been hailed as introducing a new politics to the White House, he is still fighting our century's oldest electoral battle, the fight over the New Deal.

Time plays tricks on us all. Reagan as the oldest President to be elected, and Kennedy as the youngest, will be frozen in their images, ages apart. Yet they were born only six years apart. If Kennedy had lived, he would have been sixty-three when the sixty-nine-year-old Reagan was sworn into office. It is odd to remember now, but Kennedy



was also speaking for Ronald Reagan the Army Air Force captain when, at his Inauguration, he said that "the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage, and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world." In one sense, Reagan just came to fulfill that messianic view of America's place in the world.

With the exception of Jimmy Carter's short intrusion, America has been ruled for nearly four decades by politicians who served in World War II. The men who appeared in a long succession had been rivals and contemporaries. Kennedy, Nixon, and Johnson fought over the prize in 1960. Reagan entered the fray in 1968, just as Johnson dropped out. After Eisenhower, our last President born in the nineteenth century, the new generation came onstage, represented by its youngest member, then its oldest—first Kennedy, then Johnson (born three years before Reagan). Nixon and Ford, both born two years after Reagan, preceded Carter, the exception—the first President in almost half a century not to have seen active military duty in the war (he was still at Annapolis when it ended).

So, even if Reagan has escaped the Kennedy obsession, it is not surprising that he retains a fondness for the war President, Roosevelt, on whom Kennedy tried to model

his performance. It has been considered odd for a right-wing Republican, the enemy of "big government," to admire the New Deal President. But if that is strange, it should be put beside its sister paradox, that Kennedy, who considered himself the successor to Roosevelt, was also scathing in his criticism of "the bureaucracy," of big government as a set of procedures resisting the will of a great leader. Ronald Reagan's promise to "get the government off the backs of the American people" is a culmination of the anti-Washington "counterinsurgent" tendency that was launched by Kennedy and continued by his rival-imitators. The puzzle in both Reagan's and Kennedy's attitude is this: How could they admire so heartily a man who, more than any other, helped create the huge bureaucracy both men expressed such contempt for?

Roosevelt presided over the two-stage "takeoff" of big government in America. The first stage, the New Deal, doubled the government's budget over a period of eight years. This is the achievement the right wing has always criticized. It does not seem bothered by the second stage, which was more important in bureaucratic terms. After the nascent welfare state had doubled the size of government in eight years, the warfare state doubled that larger government in half the time. In both cases, the expansion responded to emergency; and in both cases it refused to go away when the emergency had been met. Roosevelt built in terms of long-range size and continuing expansion. He did not see big government as a necessary evil.

If anything, the emergencies supplied an opportunity for developments desirable in themselves. Yet some of those who admired Roosevelt had, by 1960, become critics of the large structure that was his most lasting bequest to the nation. In the eyes of Neustadt and Kennedy, the vigor of Roosevelt's will somehow discredited the sluggish huge bodies it had called into being. It is hard for charismatic leadership to prolong itself, even in its most intimate products.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT HIMSELF COULD NOT HAVE been a post-Rooseveltian President. Those who wanted to apply his techniques to a world that those techniques had shaped were mistaking their own and Roosevelt's historic moments. Neustadt tried to teach Kennedy how Roosevelt had circumvented the bureaucracy. But Roosevelt did not circumvent the bureaucracy; he invented it in the first place.

Presidents since Kennedy have conceived their task as a David-and-Goliath struggle with the vast machinery of government. Control of all those cogs and wheels is impossible—they would just chew up the President. So a series of raids from the outside is called for, hit-and-run tactics, guerrilla government. But Roosevelt had been Goliath, not David, proliferating agencies outward from him, not sending raiders against them. The initiator of programs is not a prisoner of their past record, of precedent and procedure. He controls them by setting their goals, choosing their first personnel, presiding over their authorization. All new systems have energy and focus, from the very effort that brought them into being. The dead hand of the past is not yet felt, since the new department has no past, just a bright future.

The very pressure of events gave the early welfare state and warfare state sharp definition. Roosevelt did not have to induce a sense of crisis to get his programs accepted. The Depression was real enough; Congress begged the President for *more* bills during the busy first three months of his administration. People yearned for him to do something, anything, to meet the crisis—and the demands of that crisis, rather than any ideological program, dictated what measures he took. Some of these were makeshift, some mistaken, some illegal; but all were aimed, supported, desired. Spontaneity and resourcefulness were given a free hand—but only to create measures soon translated into programs with set procedures.

There was the same virtue of definition in war measures. Roosevelt was free to override not only ordinary procedures but basic rights. The public supported the most irregular means of guaranteeing national security—a secret decision like that to build nuclear weapons, or an arbitrary punishment like the imprisonment of Japanese-Americans, or unilateral fiat like the demand for unconditional surrender. The Manhattan Project was a spectacular success because, in time of peril, the President could

commandeer men and talent, site and materials; he could assign tasks, cloak the whole matter in secrecy, and use the weapons without consulting the citizenry. In all these ways, war gave Roosevelt quasi-dictatorial powers—powers most Americans would shudder to see granted in peacetime. After the war, the spontaneous and arbitrary yielded to settled ways again. Security procedures, for instance, may have been unfair after the war, but they were not arbitrary and secret—Congress reviewed and regularized them. If agencies created in wartime were to justify their continued existence, they had to do so by standards different from those applied at their inception. The one great exception was the CIA, whose funding was kept unconstitutionally secret, and whose mandate had a wartime character. It is no accident that the presidential itch to use charismatic power to overthrow foreign governments, or spy on Americans, or come up with criminal weapons, found its readiest outlet in the CIA's activities.

Crisis enables the charismatic leader to launch, unchallenged, projects that must *meet* challenge in a post-crisis atmosphere. Charisma, that is, must give its own products continuity by submitting to an “everydayizing” of its claims (*Veralltäglicung* in Weber, normally translated “routinizing”). The successful routinizer of charisma solves the successor problem by presiding over the dissolution of his unique first claim. Thus George Washington's authority was lent, in diluted and diffused manner, to the constitutional procedures he affirmed by his resignation of power. The alternative to this is a jealous retention of crisis powers when the crisis is abating. Then the charismatic leader will not surrender his reign to anyone else, nor submit to the least cutback in his authority—the course of Napoleon, of Stalin, of Mao. The problem of routinizing charisma is presented, in parable form, by the formulaic western movie. A gunfighter is called in to handle problems too great for the doddering sheriff. If the gunfighter, having got rid of the evil gang, tries to stay on and rule the town with his gun, then getting rid of *him* becomes the problem. If bureaucratic “big government” gets defined, permanently, as a doddering old sheriff, then each presidential election becomes a call for some new gunfighter to face the problems “government” cannot solve.

Kennedy's successors have drifted, steadily, toward this conception of their role. But their appeal to Roosevelt as a model is unjustified. It is true that crisis gave Roosevelt quasi-dictatorial power, and that dictatorship in the old Roman sense became respectable again in the thirties. A widespread disillusionment with parliamentary procedures, combined with a fear of the radical left and with economic breakdown, led to the call for strong leaders—for Hitler and Mussolini, Franco and Salazar. This mood even gave a momentary glamour of menace to American figures such as Huey Long and Father Coughlin or an Englishman such as Sir Oswald Mosley. But Roosevelt's achievement, like Washington's, was to channel his own authority into programs and institutions. In that sense,

Roosevelt resisted, even while exercising, “charisma”—relegitimizing institutions at a time when other strong leaders were *delegitimizing* them. He began that process of “routinizing” crisis powers that is the long-range meaning of the New Deal.

For Max Weber, charismatic power must always yield in time, either gracefully or by violence, to the everyday order of kingship (traditional rule) or contractual “modern” government (legal rule). And if the course taken is toward *legal* rule, then it will tend, of necessity, toward bureaucracy, toward patterns of accountability, predictability, oversight, and record-keeping. By contrast with a swift and arbitrary charismatic rule, this kind of government will seem to many “inefficient.” In the same way, due process in criminal law is slower than arbitrary justice. But outside crisis circumstances, the arbitrary soon becomes indefensible. Everyday circumstances call for a regularization of procedures.

Crisis-oriented government assembles itself for the moment, and dissolves between crises. Its actions are sporadic, ad hoc, and responsive to immediate challenge, following the leader’s “inspiration.” A bureaucracy, by contrast, assembles itself, nine to five, every working

day. Its normal arena is the normal; it resists crisis-mobilization. This is fatal if, in fact, apocalypse is just around the corner. But the opposite error is to inflate every apparent crisis into apocalypse, to think the continuing mandate of government is, as Kennedy said at his Inauguration, “the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger.” Kennedy’s indictment of Eisenhower was that he treated the Soviet menace as a new form of the old struggle between nations, not as a “twilight struggle” with the enemy of all freedom everywhere. Others think that was Eisenhower’s best contribution to a nation he took over at the height of its McCarthyite Cold War period.

The charismatic leader is not bound by precedent, informed by meetings, or submissive to advisers. But the bureaucracy works on lines set by “what we have always done.” This blunts initiative, though it lets people know, whenever they enter a program, what lies down the road for them in future years. New Deal programs such as Social Security gave much of the population an “entitlement” over society’s future resources, and that limits the society’s freedom of maneuver. The government is tied down by long-term commitments, which check the hand of those who want to refashion government from administration to administration. But the same bonds *free* the “entitled” from uncertainty about what is owed them. The discretionary funds of one President are severely limited—precisely the complaint of activist Presidents like Kennedy. The truly “big government” spending is on entitled programs, passed by Congress, that are hard for Presidents to cancel or curtail (a fact of life Ronald Reagan had to learn in the White House). A society becomes unwieldy to the extent that it lays itself open to lasting claims from its subjects. In that sense, “big government” is not despotic, not Big Brother, free to do what it likes with the populace. It is not “innovative” to the extent that it has ceased to be arbitrary. Mere size does not make for inefficiency. Accountability does.

Bureaucracy sets up many loci of authority relatively impervious to a single superintending will. In a bureaucratic order, large government is by definition *not* centralized government. Thus, when Kennedy sent his managers out to tame the bureaucracy, they often found that the only way to assert their will was to create new programs responsive to new needs, programs that were superimposed on the old, and became a further obstruction to Kennedy’s successors. Robert McNamara’s career at the Pentagon is the finest example of this process. Appointed to whip the military into line, he doubled the military budget in seven years, created counterinsurgency teams that drew the regular Army into Vietnam, then departed from government horrified at what he had accomplished.

McNamara resembled many of Kennedy’s people, and Kennedy himself, in having matured during the war years of governmental expansion. That was a time of administrative creativity, when McNamara’s planning group mul-



NARCISSI IN WINTER

They open their purses
and out fall stars.

From the long earth sleep
a perfume
sweet as manure
piercing as rain.

Out of papery domes
these green ladders ascend
trusting the air.
Nothing is truer
than their plumb line
to heaven,

so rooted in a round,
brown knowledge of themselves
and January’s
white dark.

—Celia Gilbert

tiplied exponentially the production of American airplanes. But such freedom to create left a cumbersome legacy—an Air Force so large that it sought separate status and, by its very extent and expense, limited the choices for a nuclear strategy in the postwar period. By that time, McNamara and his Whiz Kids had moved on to the Ford Motor Company, where again they were given a comparatively free hand at a time of large-scale postwar conversion to peacetime production. The opportunity would not easily (if ever) come again for “starting over.” The responsiveness of the entire company to his hand on the tiller called up illusions of control that only McNamara’s second term of Pentagon service would dispel, at great cost to him and to the nation. The man Kennedy praised for “controlling” the Pentagon at last embraced a war that controlled—and broke—him.

In other areas of government, a similar tale unfolded. Robert Kennedy could not control J. Edgar Hoover’s opposition to civil rights, and so he built a separate investigative and enforcement machinery at the Department of Justice, adding to the bureaucracy rather than “taming” it. The New Frontier’s National Security Council became a second State Department, which clashed with the original one throughout Kennedy’s and subsequent presidencies. Kennedy’s civil-rights and poverty initiatives left behind a machinery of “affirmative action” that became a target for later critics of regulation. In all these cases, the refusal to delegate just created further centers of delegated authority. Unwilling or unable to use what was at hand, Kennedy thought he could avoid procedure by using special teams—but each special team created a whole new book of procedures. The Peace Corps, born as a brilliant improvisation, soon had to cope with rules and was mired in its own bureaucratic battles.

The charismatic ruler must act directly on all parts of his government—or act, at the least, through surrogates who have a close personal tie with him. In a bureaucracy, by contrast, job security is defined irrespective of the particular jobholders. This involves a loss of the personal touch, a loss regretted, for instance, in the contrast between bureaucratic social services and the ministrations of personal “bosses” in the city machines. But this loss is balanced by a freedom from whimsical directives not subject to appeal. A bureaucracy carries to its logical extreme the principle of “a government of laws and not of men.” It would reduce even the highest officeholder to powers granted *all* Presidents. Its emphasis lies on the title: *President* Kennedy, not *President Kennedy*. The Neustadt school maintained that the presidency is only what each President makes it, that the office is defined by the

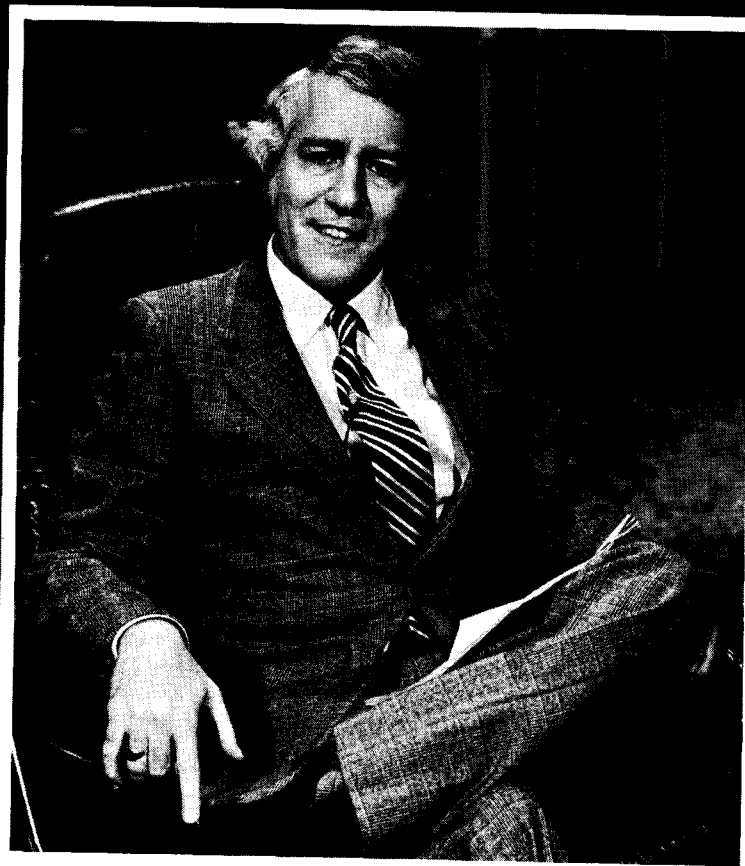
man, not vice versa. This personalization creates expectations of charisma in noncharismatic times, to be followed by inevitable disappointment.

The bureaucracy, in the accusatory phrase, “shuffles paper.” It leaves an inky trail. Bureaucrats, according to their critics, build a record “to protect their ass.” If they do not act with greater resourcefulness, it is because a *regulation* (proper number supplied here) does not admit personal initiative. This aspect of bureaucracy especially galls those who see attractive shortcuts toward an immediate goal. The awareness of always acting “on the record” limits the bargains that can be struck, the informal arrangements that break logjams. For Presidents in the Kennedy mode, the CIA became the most appealing arm of action precisely because it keeps no public record (and, in the person of Director Richard Helms, destroyed much even of the secret record).

Both Kennedy and Reagan, from their different vantage points, won applause with their attacks on governmental obstructionism and bureaucracy. Both were praised as raiders against big and unresponsive governmental structures. There is a nostalgic streak in American history that makes its citizens want to run a large empire on the values of the small town. Even as its citizens ask for security, in the sense of guaranteed status, they hymn unconfined opportunity. The market myth makes us think that spontaneity will sort out things according to their merits, without the need for planning and regulation. The individual is supposed to forge his or her own “environment,” unfettered by prior social arrangements. The governmental workings of America have more and more come to reflect the necessities of national size and ambition, while the Presidents express a romantic rejection of that machinery, a denial of the rule of necessity, a promise to escape “back” toward remembered freedoms. For Kennedy’s managers, these freedoms were the take-off opportunities of a burgeoning military establishment in World War II. For Ronald Reagan, the freedoms are those of the Chamber of Commerce’s imagined past, when “enterprise” built character. With both men, however, there was a business model for the resentment toward big government. Kennedy’s ideal was the raider style of his freewheeling father’s rise. For Reagan, it is the corporate talk of opportunity within the confines of “big business.” These two ideals cause the Kennedy Democrats and the Reagan Republicans to differ in tone and style; but this should not hide from us how both groups betray the hero they appeal to. They delegitimize government in different ways—but each way is far removed from Roosevelt’s gift for legitimating government by routinizing charisma. □

This is the first of two articles about John F. Kennedy and the presidency. The second, “The Prisoner of Toughness,” will appear next month.

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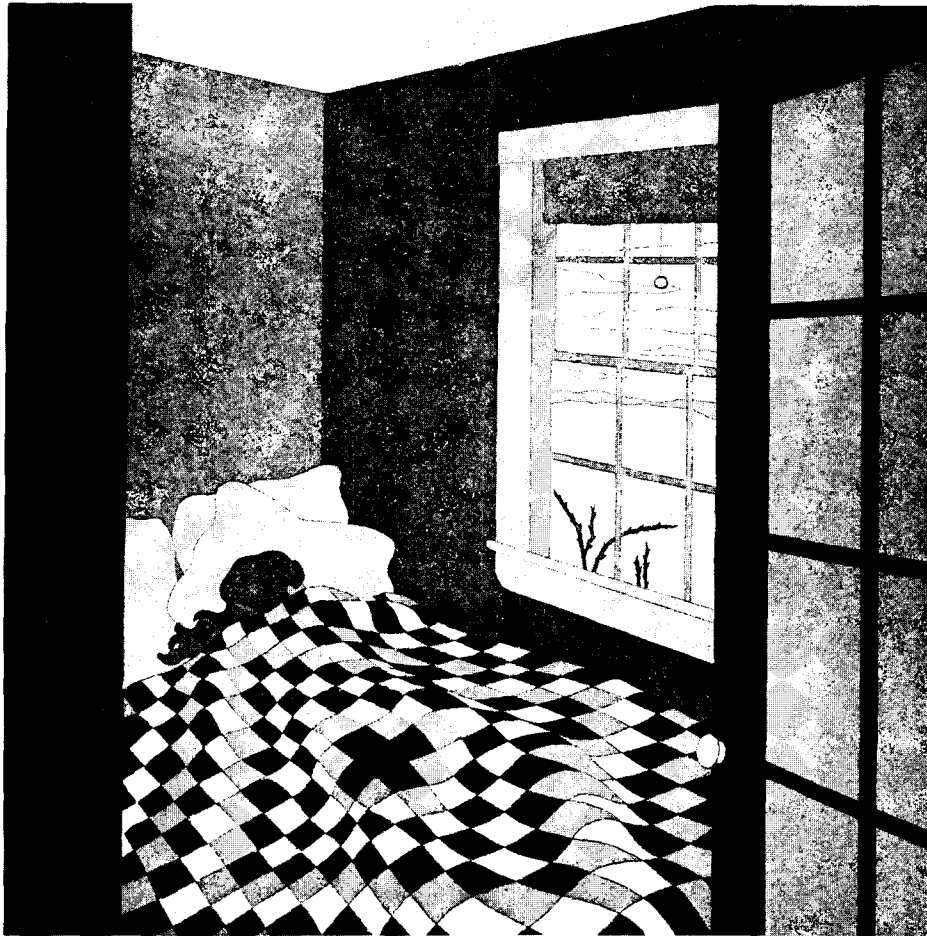
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WALL STREET WEEK



SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

A SHORT STORY BY ANN BEATTIE

THE WOODS JAKE AND LAURA ANN WERE WALKING IN were a few miles from his aunt's house, in a remote corner of Pennsylvania. His aunt was in Key Biscayne for the winter. The night before, they had trained the car headlights on the stump where she kept a jar with the house key hidden inside. Leaving New York had been a sudden whim; all day he had been thinking about the farm, and when he had mentioned it late at night to Laura Ann she had sprung out of bed and begun dressing, half seriously, half mocking. This was a just punishment for so much fretfulness. He had already complained that he wanted a garage that didn't cheat him. That he wished the damned cleaner would smile less and lose his clothes less often. And snow falling on a Friday night—what was the point, when alternate-side-of-the-street parking couldn't be suspended?

"Come on," she had said. "We act like old people. Let's go to Pennsylvania. It'll be beautiful in the morning with the sun on the snow." It was as predictable as her amazed

smile: when she took up things he had half-heartedly instigated, he would then go along with them, gradually convincing himself that he was doing her a favor. He found himself standing as she pulled her baggy jeans over the thermal long johns she slept in and searched through the sweaters in their closet. She took out the blue turtleneck. Then she stood in front of the mirror, parting her hair, sticking in a shiny, star-shaped clip to keep it out of her face. The first time he had brought her to his aunt's house, ten years before, their last spring vacation from college, she had been such a city slicker that walking through the woods she had asked what the red and aqua tubes were that she saw scattered in the bushes, not knowing they were shotgun shells.

In the morning they walked through the woods, jeans tucked into their rubber fishing boots. In front of them, heaped in the junkyard they had cut through as a shortcut, were broken pieces of a carousel: saddles without stirrups and huge horse heads with frosty eyes and

ILLUSTRATION BY GLENN LANG

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broken teeth. As she raised the camera to focus, he noticed her diamond wedding band sparkling. The brim of her hat was pulled low; it was a real John Wesley Hardin hat, a favorite left over from the sixties.

"Bracket it," he said.

She moved the camera away from her eye. "Did I ever tell you about bracketing?" she said.

"I read it in a book, I suppose."

She inched up on the horse heads, as if they might move. She crouched in the snow. It was quiet; the click disturbed the woods like a shot.

He loved her amazed smile—the way he could announce some unexpected piece of information and arouse her curiosity. She couldn't believe that he would know a thing like that—retain a term that didn't even apply to something he *did* . . . When he met her she had been the eager, bright student of literature, whose professor embarrassed her when she gave an interpretation of a book in class and he asked whether she would also climb a ladder by using the spaces between rungs.

They had brought water with them from the city, because his aunt had turned off the water before she left for the winter. It had been a long, tiring day. He drank a glass of cold water, savoring it like brandy, and he stood looking out the living room window, into the back field. It was Saturday night and she was reading old magazines, pacing around the house, sitting close to the Franklin stove. She walked away from him at the window, and he was ten feet or so away from her, but he felt the distance, that something missing he couldn't put his finger on. He decided it was fatigue: they were both tired from walking so far in the snow. They were listening to one of his aunt's collection of great old records that his aunt did not realize were great. A scratchy "Pennies From Heaven" was playing, and in his mind he played saxophone in the background, his fingers tapping out the notes on the cold windowpane. When he moved his head nose-close to the window he could see the cement driveway, full of cracks and gulleys, the part of the driveway where his mother had run a hose into the car and killed herself with carbon monoxide. The spring before, he had noticed that the driveway was now so overgrown that a wild rosebush had sent up dozens of runners.

He saw Laura Ann's reflection in the window, and though he couldn't see the details of her face, he knew them so well that they were as vivid imagined as seen: those large doe eyes, full of wonder. Now there was nothing to indicate that she didn't forgive him for his having had an affair with her friend except those eyes, sad even above a smile. He pressed his forehead to the window and looked at the black, star-covered sky. When he was a child, a friend had told him that the stars were sky stones.

It probably explained a lot that he had never gotten any misinformation about sex—only about the stars.

The quilt on top of the blanket was called Sunshine and Shadow. It had been on this bed as long as he could remember, but it was only lately, in the city, when quilts became fashionable, that he had found out the name of the pattern. It was a quilt begun by his grandmother and finished by his mother and his aunt. He had stared at it when he was a child: squares of differing sizes, alternately light and dark—a diamond pattern radiating from the smallest gray square in the center. He had hypnotized himself into dizziness studying the pattern and come to no conclusions, the way he had stared at inanimate objects years ago when he was tripping. Whatever revelations he had were long gone; he couldn't paraphrase them, so he didn't know how to talk about them. He could remember things he had thought about, but he couldn't remember his conclusions. Or, if he could, they no longer seemed to have any context.

Laura Ann was lying next to him in bed, breathing quietly, deep in sleep. The light was coming up. The star-shaped barrette had almost worked its way loose; her long, curly hair was spread around her on the pillow like a Vargas girl's in *Playboy*, but instead of being picture-pretty, her face was puffy from sleep. He kissed the tip of a curl and wondered if he loved her. On a trip to Pennsylvania a year ago, they had built a snowman, and while he chipped away, trying to make it anatomically correct below its snow belly, she had worked equally hard to pile on breasts. Somewhere in the woods, behind the junkyard, until it melted, there had been a hermaphroditic snowman.

He put his cheek against her hair, trying to think about all the strange, funny times he had had with Laura Ann, trying to forget his ex-lover. Awake, Laura Ann was often as quiet about things as she was now, in sleep, but not deliberately secretive. She had begun a course in photography during her lunch hour. He had seen the little gray plastic film container on a table and asked about it. She was going to study photography, she had said simply. Just another thing she had considered, and acted on, without ever mentioning it. His anger had been childish, saying that photography made everything into potential art, that there were easy shots sure to succeed. "You're not the first one to come up with that," she had said.

What she had not said was that knowing odd facts could be an equally cheap trick: why Bill Monroe fired Richard Greene; who made the first chocolate chip cookie; the way to get dried wax off of candlesticks. He had always remembered odd facts, trying to outshine his brother, Derek, who operated in a fog and always came out in the clear. He rolled over and remembered advice from his shrink: Don't fall asleep thinking bad thoughts about yourself. He remembered apologizing to Laura Ann for condemning photography by showing an interest in her recent prints, and the irregular black borders around them. "You chisel

out the negative holder," she had said, holding her first finger an inch above the thumb so that he could see the imaginary negative holder. "You print it exactly the way it was shot. Then there's no way you can cheat."

Before he had gone to California the previous spring, he had tried to clear his head about what he wanted. When Derek called from Los Angeles and threw around phrases like "in the money" or "out of the money," discussing closing transactions and sure ways to beat the system, all he could think of was that silliness in *Bonnie and Clyde* when Bonnie and Clyde go to the movies and watch Ginger Rogers and the chorus singing "We're in the Money" in *The Gold Diggers of 1933*. Now his brother was in California with a teenage girlfriend, driving a silver Porsche and practically living on undercooked pasta. He visited him and was amazed at his brother's life—that Derek and Liz sat on the sofa and bent over a small, square pin with a picture of Elvis Costello on it and snorted coke off of Elvis's face the way millions of middle-class people sat down for an evening cocktail.

He came back to New York with huaraches from Olvera Street and ten pints of the best-tasting strawberries he had ever eaten. He remembered standing on the other side of the X-ray machine at the airport, watching the fuzzy stacks of strawberries pass through. Thinking about *The Situation*, he had drunk too much wine and smoked too much with his brother, and he had fixated on one little aspect of Mary or Laura Ann: Laura Ann's hair versus Mary's wide-set eyes. Taking an overview? Laura Ann, naked, long and smooth-skinned; Mary, her sexy adolescent thinness, her flat breasts. Mary had given him an ultimatum: Decide or forget it. Laura Ann, who didn't know he was having an affair then, had given him a soft leather traveling bag.

When he returned that summer, the city looked grim. Few places to see the sky, buildings crowding each other. He looked out the window of the cab and saw a sharp-nosed gargoyle above the door of a building; he saw bums curled with their backs to buildings, sleeping expressionlessly, as if they had just shared some intimacy with the sidewalk. He thought about calling Mary, but didn't. She had an answering machine, and he didn't want to risk hearing Mary's voice that was not Mary's voice.

His last thought before he went to sleep now made him smile: as he had passed a man walking his golden retriever, the man had said to the dog, "I don't believe you, Morty. You pissed on the one sign of life in that treebox."

Laura Ann knew Mary. Those tearful late-night phone calls she had made months ago weren't to some mystery lover, as he had at first suspected, but to Mary. And then the phone calls stopped and she began to be nice to him again. "You pretend to be so casual," she said. "It's a good cover-up, but I know what's underneath. I know how you spend hours with your calculator meticulously going over

your bank statement. I know that you'll even read a bad book to the end. I know how you make love."

The last time he saw Mary, she was sitting at a table inside the Empire Diner when he was walking by. She didn't see him. On his way back from his cash machine, he walked into the Empire. They were squirting Windex on the table where Mary and her friends had been. He went to the phone at the end of the counter and said what he'd wanted to say for a long time. "If I love anybody, I love you, Laura Ann. Admit that you've never forgiven me. I don't want to come back and walk into that strain again."

"You wouldn't come back if you didn't want to," she said.

The woman at the piano bobbed her shoulders as she played "Fascinatin' Rhythm." A man in a gorilla suit walked in and began talking to one of the waiters, gesturing with his paw. A chauffeur, arms crossed, waited outside by a long white Cadillac.

"You love me," she said. Then, in a near whisper: "The way I cheat and chip dried food off the plates when I'm setting the table. The way I rub your shoulders. My perfume."

"Your voice," he said.

"I'm exhausted." She sighed. "Don't take it personally if I've gone to sleep when you come home."

The counterman was talking in a huddle with a waitress. "I told him that we don't take reservations. 'You show up, that's when we take your name,' I said to him. 'You come back with four other people, we'll give you the back table.' I was just doing my job."

Jake searched through his wallet and took out a business card. He dialed another number.

"This is Doctor Garfield," Garfield's voice said. "I'm not available at this time. Please leave your message at the tone, or call me at my home in an emergency." Garfield gave his home number, and there was a beep. Listening to the silence that followed, he thought: Alexander Graham Bell would never have believed that it would come to this.

Walking back to the apartment, he thought about what he had always been sure he loved: the fields in Pennsylvania, acres of them, stretching away from his aunt's farm, so flat and green. And the porch swing, missing the middle board, that he sat on to watch sunsets. The tangled mounds of peas that he tied around thick stakes in the garden, trying to keep them growing upward. The summer his uncle ripped the honeysuckle off the porch and poured poison on the ground—the stub where the vine had begun. The porch, where the honeysuckle used to criss-cross the screen, the floor transformed into complicated patterns of lace when the sunlight shone through the leaves. And the time he begged to be dressed in the neighbor's bee-keeping suit, the big spaceman helmet with netting over the front covering his head and face, and then the unexpected, horrible dread he had felt as bees swarmed around him and crawled on the suit. He had stayed rooted to the spot, paying no attention to the

neighbor, who shouted from his tractor in the not-too-far distance that it was all right—there wasn't any way he could hurt the bees. It was a million times worse than being zipped into the stiff yellow rain slicker and sent off to school. In the field, he had been petrified. Finally, the neighbor's voice had reached him and he knew he had to move, and he *did* move, trying hopelessly to shrug away the bees. Then he managed to turn his back on the hives, and eventually, as he walked, they disappeared behind him. He was at that point of life where he realized he wasn't supposed to cry anymore, but he was on the verge of tears when he sat eating toast in the neighbor's kitchen, toast soggy with butter and spread with thick, dark honey, hardly able to swallow because his throat was so constricted. Later, watching television, looking at the way astronauts floated toward each other to connect in space, he would think about the way he must have looked. There had been one acid trip, one of the last, when he had felt that same heavy disembodiment—that he was grounded, and he had to move, but it was impossible, and if he had taken off, he would have drifted not far from the ground, at a peculiar tilt, like the old man walking through air in the Chagall painting. This realization—and this present life of confusion—was a long way from his thoughts, when he had rocked in a swing missing a board, on the front porch of a house in Pennsylvania.

She was, as she had said she would be, in bed. She didn't open her eyes, although he thought that she had heard him walk in. If she had, this particular night, those steady green eyes might have had the power kryptonite had on Superman. He was always struggling to think that he didn't need her. That love didn't mean need. That crazy conflict acid produced, of having your senses touched sharply, yet knowing you were powerless to respond. Even before acid, that sudden, strength-sucking anxiety—the fear, standing in front of the big white boxes of bees swarming in and out.

What strength it took just to lie there, eyelids lightly closed, nothing to suggest that the way she looked, curled on the bed, was a position difficult to maintain. He knew that if he asked her in the morning, she would look at him with exasperation and say that she had been asleep.

He sat at the foot of the bed. She had not pulled the shade. The streetlight, streaming light through the curtains, blotched her body—luminous shapes that were almost a triangle, almost a circle. If she had opened her eyes and seen him sitting there, smiling fondly, whatever he told her about being unsure of whether they should stay together would be discounted. Her version of it would be that he thought about her so much and stared so often because he was in love. It would be like the story the neighbor told his aunt and uncle all summer: how he had loved those bees, how he had been mesmerized by them. And how, being a gentle boy, he had not wanted to make a move if it might possibly hurt them. □



TIDE TURNING

Through salt marsh, grassy channel where the shark's
A rumor—lean, alongside—rides our boat;
Four of us off with picnic-things and wine.
Past tufty clutters of the mud called *pluff*,
Sun on the ocean tingles like a kiss.
About the fourth hour of the falling tide.

The six-hour-falling, six-hour-rising tide
Turns heron-haunts to alleys for the shark.
Tide-waters kiss and loosen; loosen, kiss.
Black-hooded terns blurt kazoo-talk—our boat
Now in midchannel and now rounding *pluff*.
Lolling, we eye the mud-tufts. Eye the wine.

The Atlantic, off there, dazzles. Who said wine-
Dark sea? Not this sea. Not at noon. The tide
Runs gold as chablis over sumps of *pluff*.
Too shallow here for lurkings of the shark,
His nose-cone, grin unsmiling. *Cr-ush!* the boat
Shocks, shudders—grounded. An abrupt tough kiss.

Our outboard's dug a mud-trough. Call that *kiss*?
Bronze knee bruised. A fair ankle gashed. With "wine-
Dark blood" a bard's on target here. The boat
Swivels, propeller in a pit, as tide
Withdraws in puddles round us—shows the shark-
Grey fin, grey flank, grey broadening humps of *pluff*.

Fingers that trailed in water, fume in *pluff*.
Wrist-deep, they learn how octopuses kiss.
Then—shark fins? No. Three dolphins there—*shhh!*—are
Coquettish. As on TV. Cup of wine
To you, slaphappy sidekicks! with the tide's
Last hour a mudflat draining round the boat.

The hourglass turns. Look, tricklings toward the boat.
The first hour, poky, picks away at *pluff*.
The second, though, swirls currents. Then the tide's
Third, fourth—abundance! the great ocean's kiss.
The last two slacken. So? We're free, for wine
And gaudier mathematics. Toast the shark,

Good shark, a no-show. Glory floats our boat.
We, with the wine remaining—done with *pluff*—
Carouse on the affluent kisses of the tide.

—John Frederick Nims

OBSERVATIONS IN EGYPT

WORKS IN WATERCOLOR

BY DAVID LEVINE



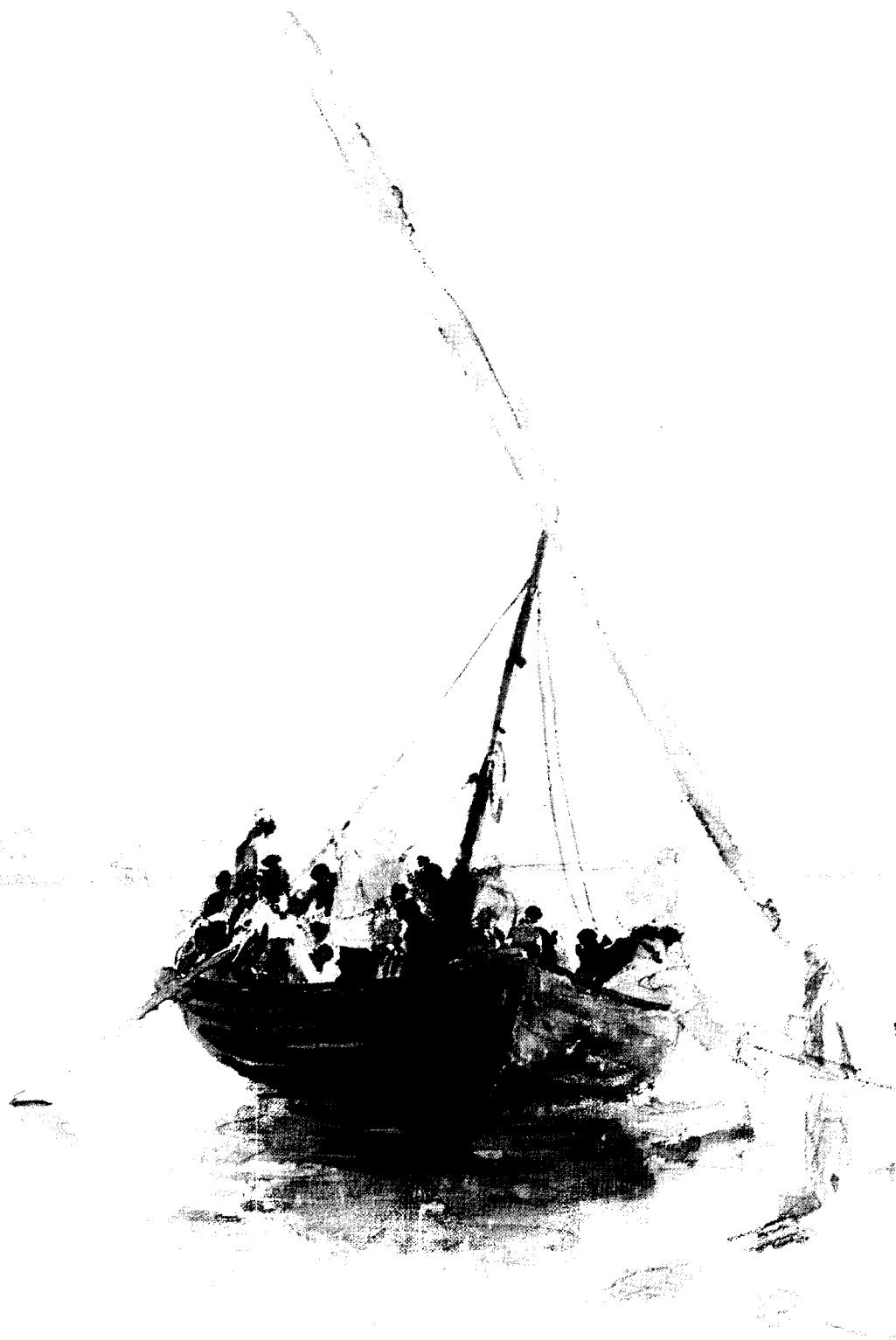
These paintings were done early last year on a trip up the Nile. They include a street scene in Cairo (on this and the opposite page) and a boat that ferries working people across the Nile (page 50). My purpose on the trip was to see various temples, but the subjects that attracted me most strongly were the garment workers I saw, working alone in doorways and nooks, as I walked down a thousand-year-old street in Aswan. I have dealt with garment workers throughout my painting life, partly because I find the garments themselves very colorful and romantic, and partly because of my family background: both my father and my grandfather were garment workers in New York, and I've always associated with people in the industry.

—D.L.

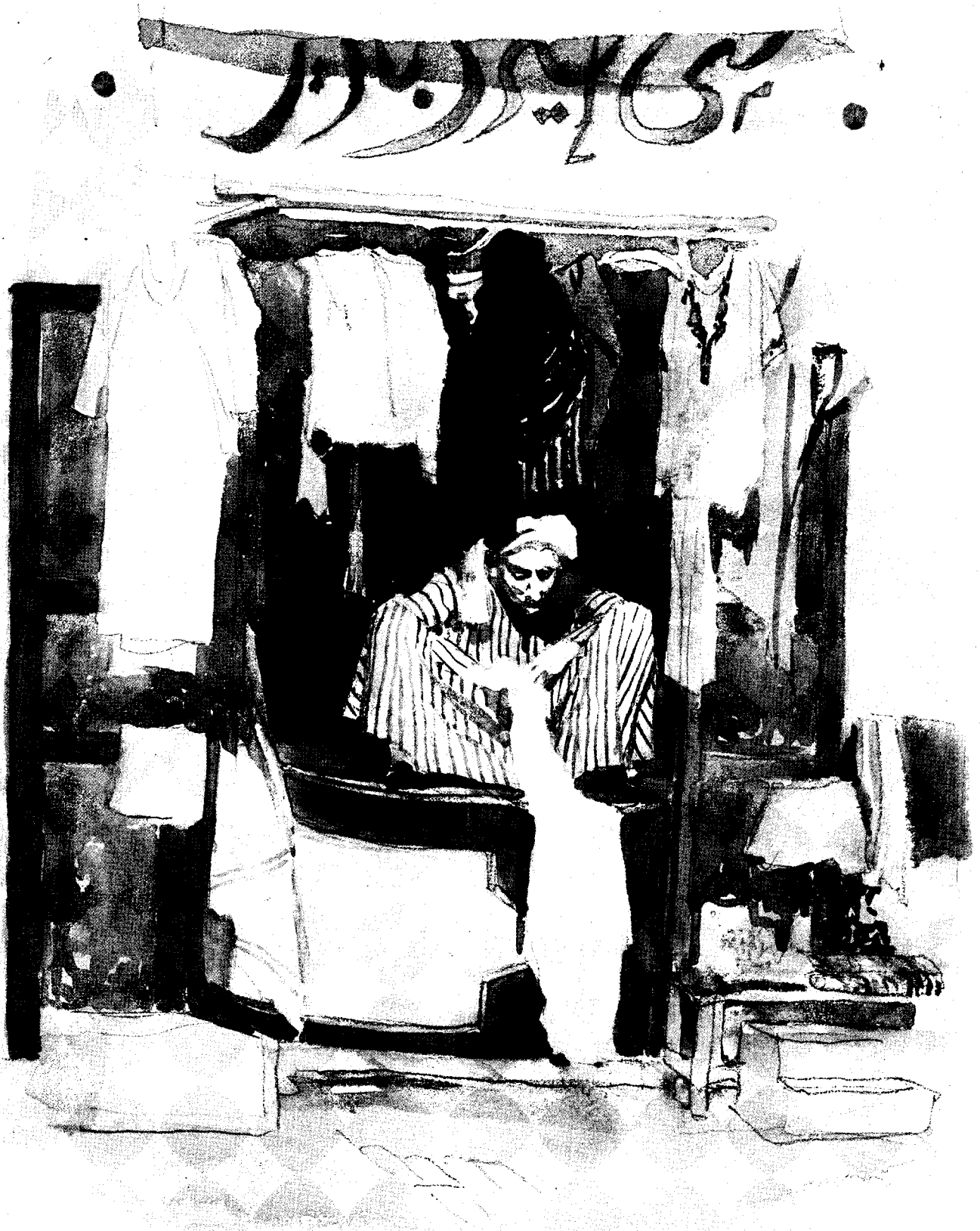












David Levine, the caricaturist and painter, will show his work at the Forum Gallery in New York beginning in March. His most recent book is The Arts of David Levine.

The "splendid," "human," "poetic" bestseller about computers.

"A high level of narrative art"

"From mid-1978 to early 1980, a group of engineers at Data General Corporation developed a new super-mini computer. In *THE SOUL OF A NEW MACHINE*, Tracy Kidder provides a factual accounting of this achievement, and anyone interested in the annals of American industry will find the story absorbing. But Mr. Kidder...has endowed the tale with such pace, texture and poetic implication that he has elevated it to a high level of narrative art..."

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a young explorer standing on the threshold of a new age. ...He proceeds by taking the reader 'down into' the machine, and indeed the book consists of repeated descents—not only into an environment of wires and silicon chips, but also into dark corporate basements where secret work proceeds feverishly behind locked doors...

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—from the New York Times Book Review's front-page review by Samuel C. Florman

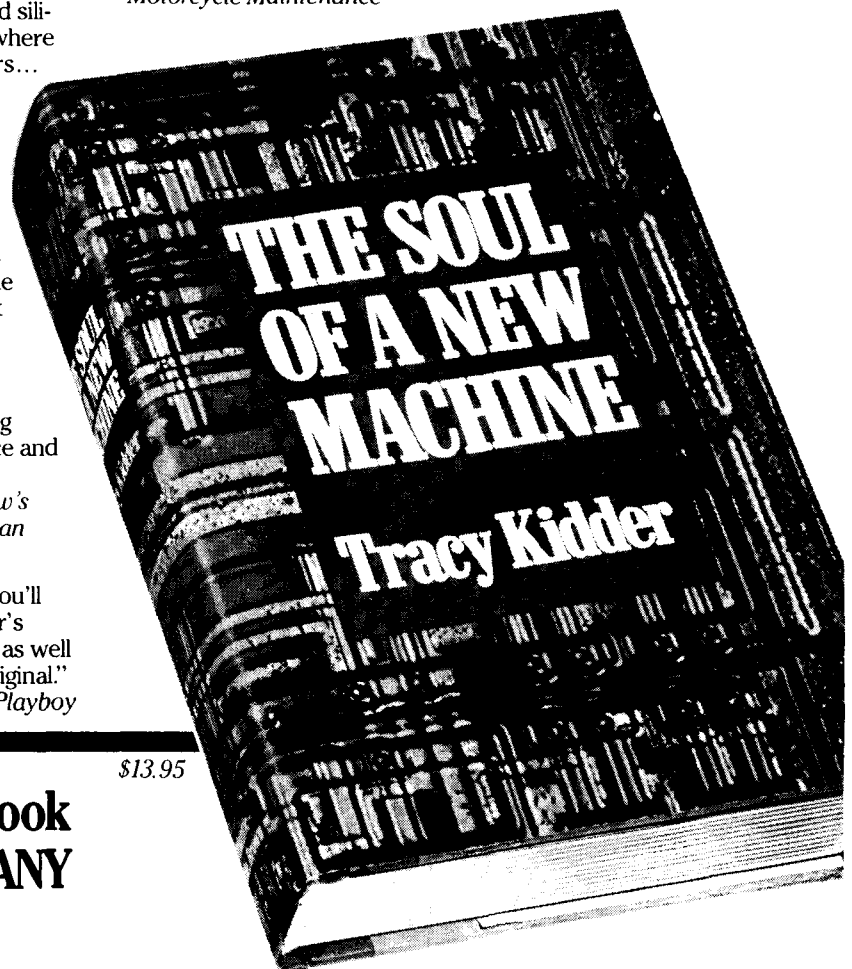
"If you like the writing of John McPhee, you'll love the work of Tracy Kidder.... What makes Kidder's book so rich is that he describes the human psyche as well as the computer industry.... Brilliant, concise and original."

—Playboy

"All of Mr. Kidder's hopes for his book have been fulfilled...."

Even someone like this reviewer, who barely understood the difference between computer hardware and software when he began, was able to follow every step." —*Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, New York Times*

"A superb book, one that computer engineering has deserved for a long time.... All the incredible complexity and chaos and exploitation and loneliness and strange, half-mad beauty of this field are honestly and correctly drawn here." —*Robert Pirsig, author of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*



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*Research has turned from the infant's physical needs
to his native abilities*

THE COMPETENCE OF BABIES

BY SUSAN QUINN

THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF CARING FOR A NEWBORN baby, as parents discover when they bring one home from the hospital, is not the feeding or the diapering or even the waking in the night; it is living with the unknown. What must the baby be thinking as he lies awake, sucking on his hand and staring at the crib posts, when he cries and isn't hungry?

Faced with the baby's mysteriousness, parents seem to want the certainty experts proffer. Even in another age, when young parents were surrounded by an extended family of mothers, aunts, younger siblings, and cousins, they did not rely entirely on the experience of loved ones. Eager to do the modern and correct thing, they also turned for guidance to books. Benjamin Spock, whose *Baby and Child Care* has been the best-selling book of this century, is just one in a long line of advice-wielding baby-doctors. In 1872, there was Combe's *The Mother's Guide for the Care of Her Children; or the Management of Infancy*; in 1881, Hartmann's *Modern Baby; or the Art of Nursing and Raising Children*. Around the turn of the century, Drs. L. Emmett Holt and J. P. C. Griffith each came out with a manual. Holt's *The Care and Feeding of Children; a Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses* went through at least a dozen printings, and successive editions of Griffith's *The Care of the Baby* were published over a period of twenty-five years.

The one thing all baby books have in common is a tone of absolute confidence. And yet the certainties differ from one era to the next. In the 1890s, an expert advocated a start on toilet-training at three months. In the 1940s, parents were cautioned not to begin before the second year. In the 1850s, an expert deplored bottle feeding. In the 1930s, scheduled feedings and bottles were in. By the 1960s, flexibility and the breast were coming back into favor.

On the subject of the interior life of the infant—what the infant himself or herself experiences—the differences of opinion are monumental. In 1895, Dr. Griffith, a clinical professor of diseases of children, at

the University of Pennsylvania, insisted in his book that the infant experiences next to nothing. "When the baby is just born," he wrote, ". . . it is . . . very little more intelligent than a vegetable. Its soul and its intellect are there, but they are dormant, waiting to be awakened. It has also little control over its body, and all its movements are automatic or instinctive. Probably there is not a single expression of the face or motion of the arms or legs which is caused by a distinctly willed action. . . . A new-born baby probably cannot see except to distinguish light from darkness and will not wink when the finger is brought close to its eyes. It seems also unable to hear, and at first cannot smell, although taste is well developed. It is, in fact, not directly conscious of anything." Protesting, perhaps, against parents' tendency to read intelligence into their little darlings' behavior, Griffith wrote: "When it nurses at the breast it does not know it is nursing, and when it cries it is ignorant of any sensation that makes it cry."

By the time Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care* first came out, in 1946, the infant was getting a little more credit. But he was still, in his early months at least, believed to be entirely absorbed in experiencing physical sensations, ignorant of the boundaries between himself and those who cared for him. Back in the fifties, when parents consulted Spock's book to find out about crying, they were advised to look for physical reasons for the baby's discontent: he might be hungry; he might be colicky; he might have an open safety pin sticking into him. Or he might be fussing because he had an immature nervous system. But Spock went on to say that a crying baby was not fussing because of an emotion. "The baby is not mad at you," Spock told parents. "He doesn't know yet that you are a person or that he is a person. He's just a

bundle of organs and nerves during his first month. Some kind of pain is spreading through his system, and it automatically sets all his limbs to thrashing."

In the past twenty years, and dramatically in the past ten, the "can't-do" baby that Spock described has been eclipsed by a "can-do" baby—a baby so attuned and responsive to his environment that, even in the uterus, he is reacting to voices, to light, and,



Susan Quinn is a writer who lives near Boston.

perhaps, to his mother's moods. This "new" baby is activated not only by internal pain and appetite but by language and smiles and particular people. The operative word, in descriptions of this baby, is "competence."

"There's been a whole burst of knowledge about infant competence in the past twenty years," T. Berry Brazelton, a pediatrician, says, "demonstrating how much more the infant was paying attention to auditory, to visual, to tactile stimuli than we ever knew before." Dr. Brazelton is the author of *Infants and Mothers* and *On Becoming a Family*, which have replaced *Baby and Child Care* as the most popular sources of information about babies. He has also spent the close to twenty years developing the Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale, a measure of twenty-six behavioral and twenty reflex activities of the newborn, or the "neonate," as pediatricians say. In hospitals around the country, where it is used to assess newborns, the scale is known as "the Brazelton."

I visited Brazelton not long ago in his office at Children's Hospital Medical Center, in Boston, where he is chief of the child development unit. He is a tall, somewhat stooped man, and his half-moon glasses, perched low on his slightly dented nose, make him look professorial but kindly. He speaks with the ease of one who has stated his case many times before—to reporters, TV audiences, and parents. In one hand, he often fingers a small red-flannel bag, with the initials TBB stitched on the side—the talisman of his belief in infant competence. Inside the drawstring bag are the instruments of his science: a red-plastic spice box, hinged on one side with a circular bandaid and partially filled with popcorn kernels; a small bell; a flashlight; an orange rubber ball one inch in diameter; a paper clip. He uses these to demonstrate just how competent he believes newborn infants to be.

Brazelton led the way over to Brigham and Women's Hospital and on to the maternity ward, where he asked the nurse at the desk if she could find him a baby. The nurse understood the request—"You want to do the Brazelton, right?"—and went off in the direction of the nursery to look for a subject. A few minutes later, a mother's permission had been granted and Brazelton cheerfully wheeled a small plastic bassinet out of the nursery. The subject, exactly one day old, was a boy named Adam. Brazelton, however, called the baby "she" at first; it was competence, not gender, that preoccupied him. He steered Adam's bassinet into a washroom barely large enough for us, closed the door, and turned out the light. We were together in a womblike twilight.

Adam was sound asleep on his stomach, his head turned to one side, a blue-flannel blanket tightly tucked around him. "It's good that

he's sleeping," Brazelton said softly, "because it means we can try out more things." He reached into his red-flannel bag, pulled out the flashlight, and shone the beam onto the baby's blanket, well below his head. Then he directed it slowly upward, past the edge of the blanket and onto Adam's face. The first time, Adam grimaced in his sleep when the beam hit his face. The second time, his face barely twitched. The third time, nothing happened at all.

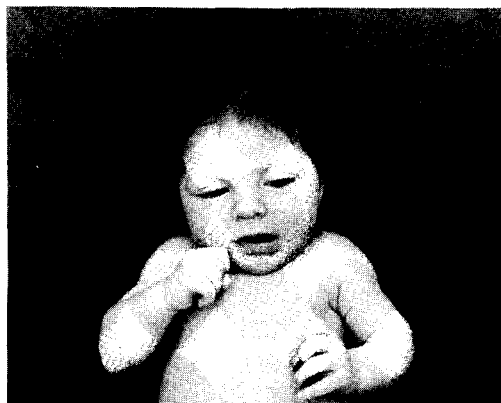
Brazelton slowly pulled the flannel blanket down to expose the tiny body in diapers and long-sleeved undershirt. Then he rattled the plastic box full of popcorn kernels in Adam's ear. This time, Adam's reaction was more dramatic: at the rude noise so near his ear, his tiny legs drew up in seeming annoyance and his face contorted in the beginning of a cry. Brazelton paused. Then he shook the box again. This time Adam jerked fleetingly. A pause and then a third rattle: Adam slept on, oblivious. Brazelton did a similar test with a paper clip: three times he poked Adam's tiny red foot—each time with a diminished response.

Brazelton was using the flashlight, the rattle, and the paper clip to demonstrate an ability possessed by normal newborns at the moment of birth to screen out intrusions into their peace and quiet. This "shutting-down" mechanism, as Brazelton proceeded to show, is just one of many abilities Adam and other newborns possess.

Lifted out of the bassinet and roused, Adam gazed interestedly into Brazelton's eyes and turned his head to follow them. With Brazelton cheering him on ("You can do it! You can do it!"), he followed the small orange ball in a semicircular arc as well. He was as good at finding sounds as at following with his eyes. When one of us spoke near his ear but out of his line of vision, he turned toward the voice. And his final aural feat was the most remarkable of all. Brazelton had told me about a surefire game he sometimes plays with newborns. If you place a baby within earshot but out of the line of vision of a man and a woman and have them talk simultaneously, the baby invariably turns toward the female voice. (The best guess as to why babies prefer the female voice is that it is more familiar than the male: they have already lived very near it for nine months *in utero*. In any event, this particular preference is one that, according to Brazelton, is demonstrated even by premature infants, many of whom are incapable

of the other responses Adam made.) We tried the test on Adam. Sure enough, when he was held up to our eye level and heard, simultaneously, a female voice on one side and Brazelton's on the other, he turned toward the female.

By this time, our subject was clearly too hungry and restless to continue: he was alternating between fussy crying and sucking on Brazelton's finger. Brazelton wheeled Adam into his mother's



room for his lunch. "I'm just sorry we got such a cranky baby," Brazelton remarked as we left the maternity ward. "They can be so much fun." Nevertheless, Adam's brief performance had succeeded in calling into question whole books of prior gospel about neonates. Certainly it gave the lie to Griffith's version of the newborn as vegetable—not conscious of anything in the outside world. And when Adam responded to the female voice rather than the male one, he demonstrated an ability even more surprising: the ability to discriminate. In fact, the discovery of the infant's capacity for choice is transforming the expert view of infancy.

The idea that infants can discriminate was first tested by a psychologist at Western Reserve University, Robert Fantz, more than twenty years ago, in 1958. Fantz, whose work until then had been with baby chimpanzees, asked what would seem to be a simple and obvious question: Do human babies like looking at one thing better than another? Other experimenters, before Fantz, had studied how babies respond to stimuli: light in their eyes, for instance, or a bang in the ear. But until Fantz, no one had suspected that babies could possess, let alone demonstrate, a preference. To answer his question, Fantz placed each of twenty-two infants in a sort of hammock, then slid the hammock into a box he called a "stimulus chamber." In two openings a foot above the infant's head, he placed two "targets"—cardboard squares for the baby to look at. The baby could choose between the two: various pairings of a bull's-eye, a stripe, a checkerboard pattern, and several plain geometric shapes. An experimenter, watching through a peephole in the chamber ceiling, would see the tiny image of the target reflected in the infant's pupils and activate a timer to record the length of each fixation.

It turned out that babies did have clear biases. They consistently gazed longer at a patterned target than at a plain one, and did so at one week as well as at six months. And their preferences changed, even within the first six months of life. During the first two months, infants preferred, by a wide margin, to look at the striped pattern rather than the bull's-eye. After two months, they switched, with similar enthusiasm, to a preference for the bull's-eye over the stripe.

Many variations on Fantz's experiment followed. The more researchers *expected* from babies, the more they seemed to get. In 1970, Genevieve Carpenter discovered that infants not only prefer certain patterns over others but are capable, at one month, of distinguishing between their mother's face and others. Another experiment has demonstrated that babies express themselves not only with their eyes but also with the rest of their bodies. In the early 1970s, two pediatricians at Boston Uni-

versity, William S. Condon and Louis W. Sander, filmed adults talking to eleven newborn babies, then used the elaborate techniques of "kinesics" to find out whether there was any correspondence between an adult's words and a newborn's body movements. By slowing down the film, they were able to show that the babies' bodies were actually moving in synchrony with the words. This experiment was later reproduced in a film, *The Amazing Newborn*. When the film is slowed down, the undulations of a baby's body, in synchrony with the words "I love you," are unmistakable.

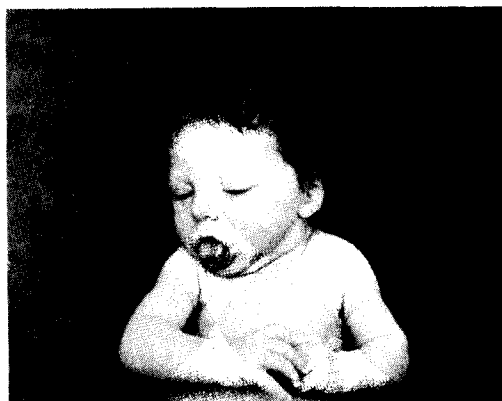
As a result of research in the past decade, timetables for various abilities have been moved way back. Jean Piaget, in his study of cognitive development, placed the ability to imitate facial gestures at about eight to twelve months. But two psychologists at the University of Washington now claim to have discovered, after making faces systematically at eighteen infants, that babies can copy facial expressions at twelve to twenty-one days.

Taken together, all these findings seem to suggest that babies enter the world with certain preferences and inclinations. The notion of the baby as a *tabula rasa*, in John Locke's phrase, or, as Henry James put it, a "blooming buzzing confusion, a blank slate to be written on by his world," no longer fits.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DISCOVERIES WERE PARTICULARLY intriguing in the psychological realm. Once it was clear that infants give off readable cues, it seemed possible that one could learn, by watching them carefully, something about the great unknown: the nature of infant experience. Furthermore, if the infant is, in fact, so "tuned in" to his environment, then it seemed likely that the way the baby and his family get along during the first two years of life might shape personality in ways that earlier theorists hadn't believed possible.

The theory of infant experience that prevailed in the sixties, when these new discoveries began to be made, was based on Freudian principles. Freud described the first two years of life as an oral phase, dominated by bodily experiences of hunger, nursing, satiation, and elimination. Freud, of course, had almost no experience

treating children, so his ideas were based entirely on the memories of adult patients. But later psychoanalysts who *did* treat children provided a more detailed picture of infancy. Probably the most influential among this group is Margaret Mahler. Mahler has focused, in her work and writing, on how the child achieves (or fails to achieve) separation from his parents and individuation. She maintains, in her book *On Human Symbiosis and*



the *Vicissitudes of Individuation*, that the early months are spent in a state of "normal symbiosis, in which the infant behaves and functions as though he and his mother were an omnipotent system—a dual unity within one common boundary." It is a state, she maintains, in which the infant is "fused" with the mother, "in which the 'I' is not yet differentiated from the 'not-I', and in which the inside and outside are only gradually coming to be sensed as different." When Spock tells parents that the baby "doesn't know yet that you are a person or that he is a person," he is passing on, in simpler language, the ideas of Margaret Mahler.

But the direct observation of babies, by Fantz and others, seems to suggest a baby who *is* something of a separate person—possessed of some clear likes and dislikes of his own. And, as a result, observers of normal infants are engaged in a debate with Mahler about the nature of infant experience. In particular, they question Mahler's method of learning about infancy. In large part, her conclusions are retrospective, based on her work with somewhat older children. Furthermore, many of the children she has observed are disturbed, and therefore may not be the best sources of information about normal infancy. "Margaret Mahler," as one infancy researcher put it, "is not a baby-watcher. She's a pathology-watcher."

It was his unhappiness with the retrospective approach to understanding infancy that prompted Daniel Stern, a research psychiatrist at Cornell University Medical Center, in New York City, to become involved in infancy research. "In psychiatry," Stern notes, "one of the things that you have to do all the time, after you write up cases, is to give a psychodynamic formulation—how somebody got to be the way they are. And I always found, and I think most of my colleagues found, that surmising what happened in the earliest years was one of the most painful intellectual exercises, because it was about 90 percent moonshine. You would say 'there was a trauma in the oral period, or in the mother-infant interaction.' You would weave this *story*. And that didn't seem right. Yet it seemed like such an important part of what everybody assumed was the beginning of things. And I never understood, when we would say, for instance, that the mother was intrusive—or whatever she was—what that would mean to the *baby*."

Stern and his research group are attempting to apply some of the careful observational techniques of researchers such as Fantz to an exploration not just of what babies can do but of what they may perceive and feel. Along with other such groups around the country, they are attempting to look at more than isolated infant reactions to various stimuli—at the whole range of infant behaviors, in a vari-

ety of settings. Some of these researchers are studying infants in nurseries and at home. The members of Stern's group do most of their observing in a small, carpeted, unfurnished room at Cornell's Payne Whitney Clinic. There, mothers and their infants have been coming several times a year over two-year periods to play together, observed by staff members and videotaped.

Stern, who is the author of a book called *The First Relationship: Mother and Infant* and of numerous articles on what he calls "the biology of interpersonal behavior," traces his interest in pre-verbal behavior to an experience he had when he was two years old. "I was very sick and in the hospital. And I had a nursemaid who spoke no English. I suspect, from what I can piece together of it, that when I was in the hospital, I didn't really understand what people around me were saying when they spoke English. Yet it mattered a great deal. And so I became a watcher. I still tend to go after the non-verbal and to dismiss the verbal. I figure that the non-verbal really tells you what's happening, and the verbal is just fine tuning."

Stern is forty-seven, trim, with wiry pepper-and-salt hair and moustache. He dresses in the linen pants and soft-leather imported shoes of a man who pays attention to clothes, but at the hospital, perhaps in order to leave no doubt as to the scientific nature of his research, he wears the traditional, stiffly starched, long white doctor's coat. Stern began his career in pharmacology research, studying the effects of drugs on the brain. "It was fascinating," he recalls, "and I was fairly committed to doing that. And slowly I realized that I was more interested in behavior." Before he could switch, however, he had to convince himself that research on the behavioral level was as legitimate as biochemical research. "There is an assumption among medical people that if you can explain a piece of behavior on a biochemical basis, then you've understood it. And it took me a long time to realize that the behavioral level was not explicable in terms of the other, that it was a level unto itself and had just as much validity. Finally, I junked the whole thing and said I wanted to work at the behavioral level. Which, strangely enough, felt like a rebellion."

After a psychiatric residency at Columbia, Stern decided he wanted to study the development of small babies.

"Somebody had taken some tapes of schizophrenic mothers and their babies. And I sat for a couple of months and just watched them. That started me on the whole thing." Stern's interest shifted quickly from disturbed mother-infant pairs to normal ones. "With regard to abnormal behavior," he says, "I think the most interesting discoveries are going to end up being biochemical. I think the close looking at the development of



behaviors is going to be much more relevant to understanding normal behavior than pathological. It could be that, as far as abnormalities are concerned—I mean major-league abnormalities, like autism, or childhood depression—all this research we're doing is absolutely useless. But that doesn't bother me, because having a biology of interpersonal behavior either is legitimate or it isn't."

Stern and other baby-watchers use the word "biology" because it places them in the company of scientists who observe not only humans but also the rest of the animal world. Like Fantz, whose work with human infants grew out of work with baby chimpanzees, baby-watchers hope to see their subjects freshly, by adopting the detached view of observers of other species. The aspect of such biology that interests Stern is what he calls "the scientific study of the development of human relationships," particularly during the first two years of life. "I see it as a rather slow process of putting together the pieces that will permit us to understand how a relationship develops, a task that's going to take a long time and that we're really at the very beginning of."

Stern and his group do their work in three small rooms, on three different pieces of the puzzle. In one room, Patricia Nachman, a psychologist, has set up a plywood puppet theater she calls "the infant theater." There she stages peekaboo games for seven-month-olds using a Kermit the Frog and a rabbit puppet, in an attempt to test infant memory for pleasurable experiences. Next door, another psychologist, Roanne Barnett, is working on a different project: a chart that will provide the group with some objective measures of what they see in the hours of films they have made of babies and mothers. The scale they have devised is symmetrical—both the baby's and the mother's actions and reactions are entered. (It is possible to see the facial expressions of both because two cameras, one trained on the baby's face and one on the mother's, are running at all times during the videotaping.) "What we hope to do," Barnett explains, "is devise a scale, using normal babies, which will be universally applicable and which can be used with or without a camera. It may also be useful in detecting and working with troubled infants and their parents."

On a video monitor in his office, Stern is working on a third piece of the puzzle, culling scenes from the hours of videotape of infant-mother interactions. He showed me a scene from one of the many hours of film which he calls "The Shoot-out at the OK Corral." The battle, in this case, is between nine-month-old "Michael" and his mother. The mother is seated on the floor, next to a wooden jigsaw puzzle with four large pieces: a sun, a bird, an apple, and a leaf. Calling Michael's name, she takes

the leaf out of the puzzle and puts it back in again. Michael crawls over to the puzzle. His mother holds the leaf out for him. Michael takes the piece with one hand, sits back on his feet, and proceeds to raise it slowly to his mouth. "No . . . It's not for eating," his mother says. She takes the puzzle piece away. Michael lets out a yell—very quick but loud. "Don't you yell at your mothah," she says, in a feisty New York accent. Then, curiously, she hands him back the piece and watches while he raises it to his mouth. Catching his hand, she utters an emphatic "No." When Michael then makes a vehement sound of protest ("Uh-h-h!"), she lets go, and Michael chews on the piece, murmuring contentedly. "Taste good?" his mother asks. "It's only cardboard."

Stern is studying a particular kind of mother-baby event he calls a "prohibitive," trying to discover how a baby responds when the mother says "no." He is curious, he explains, about the degrees of prohibition and whether the baby responds differently to different versions of "no." And he is curious about how the particular reactions of each baby influence the mother. Stern sees babies and mothers as "couples"—partners in a developing relationship. In the "shoot-out" sequence, for instance, Stern notes that Michael's loud protest caused his mother to give in to him. "In this case," Stern notes, "Michael's gumption, his tenacity, is a very important determinant of how the relationship will evolve. And the message from the mother is that if he asserts himself strongly, he gets what he wants. I'm becoming more and more interested in these scripts," Stern explains, "in seeing 'a world in a grain of sand.'"

It turns out that the "shoot-out" is not an isolated incident. Michael and his mother frequently clash over the same issue: he wants to put things in his mouth and she doesn't want him to. Since it is such a pervasive theme, Stern has decided to use the films of Michael and his mother to study "prohibitives" in depth. He has looked through the films taken over the entire two-year period to find instances of Michael getting caught in the "prohibitable act"—putting something in his mouth—and has found sixty-three episodes. He has carefully documented each one of the episodes on a large chart: what the mother said, how she said it (as measured by laryngeal tension and pitch), what Michael's expression was, and what he did. A linguist, John Dore, of the City University of New York, has also been studying the exchanges, analyzing their specific word content.

The task of piecing together the sixty-three episodes into one film and charting the interactions is nearly complete. The day I visited, Stern was checking a few small details. In the observation at six months, Michael is playing with a



felt-covered doll that has zippers to zip, laces to lace, and purple-felt shoes. Michael likes to chew on the shoes. At one point, Michael is chewing purposefully on the shoes when his mother says, "Don't eat the shoes." His hands move the doll downward, momentarily, from his mouth, then bring it back. Stern, attempting to see if Michael's face "sobers," rewinds and plays the incident over several times. He decides there is a brief, split-second break in the baby's momentum. (I'm not so sure I see it.)

What is powerfully clear and persuasive in this collage, however, is that Michael and his mother, from four months on, do have a set piece that they enact over and over again—what Stern calls a "standard sequence." At four months, Michael is putting a rattle in his mouth and his mother is telling him not to. Later it's a triangular wood block he tries to chew on, during a period when he's probably teething; then it's the purple shoes; another time it's the plastic donut-shaped rings from a conical stacking toy. And each time, his mother is there, telling him not to put the thing in his mouth. Sometimes she uses what Stern has called "disgustives"—phrases such as "yuck, yuck, yuck." Sometimes she uses what he calls "depressives": "You're going to eat the pieces," said with a sigh. One of these "depressives" is greeted by Michael with apparent anger. He throws the piece across the room, shouts, and knocks over the stacking cone he has been playing with. To judge from the brief filmed intervals of Michael when his mother is out of the room, it seems that he is reacting to her restrictions then, too. Left alone with the toys, he indulges in a sort of orgy—chewing on a block, on a book, on the doll's purple shoes.

Stern tells me that many other films of infant-mother couples have almost no oral "prohibitives" in them. They may well have equally discernible and persistent themes, but not this particular one. He believes that these highly individual mother-infant scripts will reappear again and again, with progressive variations, throughout life.

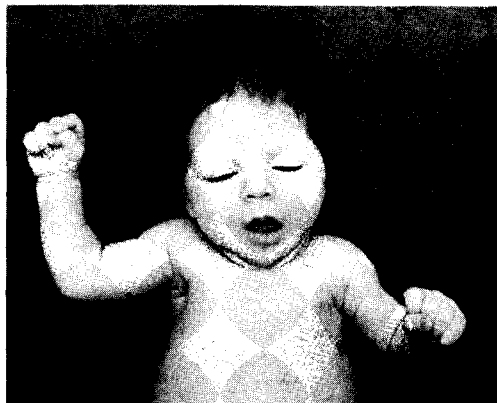
"I sometimes labor," Stern comments, "under a sort of mental homunculus theory. I don't really believe—and this is a personal take that I'm still trying to write down—that there is such a thing as development at all, in the way that we've been using the word. Perhaps the major issues in life—issues of dependence/independence, of being understood or not being understood—are there from the beginning. And the only thing that grows or develops are the skills with which to play out these ubiquitous battles. You see, we've acted like the *issues* changed: at one point there's the oral issue, at another there's the anal issue, and there's the phallic issue, and there's the independence issue, and so on. I'm saying the issues don't change. And that requires a little bit of changing of

what we're talking about when we talk about development."

Unlike Margaret Mahler and other psychoanalytic theorists, baby-watchers such as Stern have come to believe that physical gratification is only a small part of what infants need to thrive. In Stern's view, a baby whose physical needs are met but who is not "understood" by the parent is likely to have difficulty. "Basic trust that when you're hungry you're going to be fed is clearly important. But I think one of the things that's most basic and important to a baby is being understood. Certainly by the third or fourth month of life, being understood starts to be very important. I can conceive of babies doing reasonably well if feeding is just minimally handled. But they're going to have a lot more trouble if they're not understood."

What Stern means when he talks about "understanding"—and "misunderstanding"—between parents and babies can best be illustrated by two different mother-baby scenes in his book *The First Relationship*. The first is a brief episode in the midst of the bottle-feeding of a three-month-old:

While talking and looking at me the mother turned her head and gazed at the infant's face. He was gazing at the ceiling, but out of the corner of his eye he saw her head turn toward him and turned to gaze back at her. This had happened before, but now he broke rhythm and stopped sucking. He let go of the nipple and the suction around it broke as he eased into the faintest suggestion of a smile. The mother abruptly stopped talking and, as she watched his face begin to transform, her eyes opened a little wider and her eyebrows raised a bit. His eyes locked on to hers, and together they held motionless for an instant. The infant did not return to sucking and his mother held frozen her slight expression of anticipation. This silent and almost motionless instant continued to hang until the mother suddenly shattered it by saying "Hey!" and simultaneously opening her eyes wider, raising her eyebrows further, and throwing her head up and toward the infant. Almost simultaneously, the baby's eyes widened. His head tilted up and, as his smile broadened, the nipple fell out of his mouth. Now she said, "Well hello! . . . heelló . . . heelloóoo!", so that her pitch rose and the "hellos" became longer and more stressed on each successive repetition. With each phrase the baby expressed more pleasure, and his body resonated almost like a balloon being pumped up, filling a little more with each breath.



A mother, reading such a passage, is likely to experience both recognition and bemusement. The chances are good that she did that sort of thing with her baby. But why break it down into such tiny component parts, when it usually comes so naturally without analysis? There is a way in which analyz-

ing this “understanding,” as Stern calls it, or “fit,” as Brazelton has called it, can be more than theoretically useful, and that is in situations where, for one reason or another, a natural mutuality or overlapping between baby and parent doesn’t occur. Sometimes there is a misunderstanding because a baby is premature or has an immature nervous system. An overanxious parent, or even an average one who is particularly energetic in relating to a tense baby, can find the baby unresponsive—nervous, fussy, or just turned off. Stern provides a vivid example in *The First Relationship*—an exchange between a three-month-old girl named Jenny and her overly intrusive mother:

Whenever a moment of mutual gaze occurred, the mother went immediately into high-gear stimulating behaviors, producing a profusion of fully displayed, high-intensity, facial and vocal infant-elicited social behavior. Jenny invariably broke gaze rapidly. Her mother never interpreted this temporary face and gaze aversion as a cue to lower her level of behavior, nor would she let Jenny self-control the level by gaining distance. Instead, she would swing her head around following Jenny’s to re-establish the full-face position. Once the mother achieved this, she would reinstate the same level of stimulation with a new arrangement of facial and vocal combinations. Jenny again turned away, pushing her face further into the pillow to try to break all visual contact.

In Jenny’s case, the misunderstanding eventually corrected itself. As Jenny matured, she was able to tolerate more stimulation and she and her mother enjoyed more mutual satisfaction. But other pairs who are having difficulty have benefited from intervention. Dr. Brazelton has found that a mother who is having trouble can often be helped just by looking with him at a videotape of her interaction with her baby.

MUCH OF WHAT BABY-WATCHERS ARE FINDING OUT about infants, through observation, has been known instinctively by most parents all along. The theorists may have thought that physical sensations were all that mattered during the infant’s early months, but parents have always done a lot of looking, talking, and general communicating that wasn’t tactile. The work of people such as Stern merely affirms that all that cooing, baby-talking, and bouncing was something other than foolishness—that it was, rather, an essential part of bringing up baby.

For parents, the most important unanswered—and perhaps unanswerable—question is what these early interactions have to do with the outcome. How important are they to the person the child will eventually become? Stern believes

that they are crucial. In the case of Michael, for instance, he believes that the frequent struggles he has with his mother over putting things in his mouth will figure in some way in future relationships, “certainly with women,” if not with everyone.

Others, most notably Jerome Kagan, a psychologist at Harvard, disagree. Kagan doesn’t dispute the discoveries supporting infant competence, but he believes that children have an elasticity that allows them to reverse the effects of early deprivations and problems. From studies of infants in other cultures and in the United States, Kagan has concluded that the earliest experiences are not necessarily lasting. “Resistance to that view,” he has written, “is based on loyalty to what might be called a ‘tape recorder’ theory of development, which assumes that from the first day of life every salient experience is recorded somewhere in the brain and is never erased.” Kagan, however, suggests that the mind may be “more like a painter and her canvas than a tape recorder.” He goes on, “We stumble on an artist who has completed a scene containing only a tree and a bush. When we return one year later, the painter has been working continually, the tree and bush have become part of a thick forest scene and neither form is recoverable.”

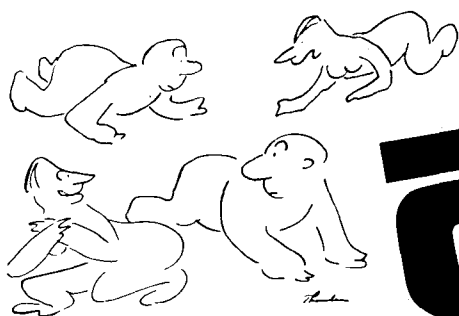
At Boston University, Gerald Stechler, a psychologist, is working on a research project that challenges Kagan’s painter hypothesis. Stechler insists, “No part of development can be dismissed until you know the way in which those events enter into the organization of the system.” Stechler was involved in one of the earliest and most ambitious long-range studies of infants, undertaken twenty-five years ago by a Boston University research team headed by Dr. Eleanor Pavenstedt. Now he is working on a follow-up study with other researchers, under the direction of Louis W. Sander (whose research on infant movements was mentioned earlier). One group of researchers, Stechler among them, is carefully going over the voluminous notes, files, films, and tests of twenty-eight of the thirty infants in the original study. When this is completed, they will try to predict, on the basis of their review, what sort of adults the babies became. Researchers in a second group have gotten in touch with twenty-eight of the original subjects, now in their twenties. They will in-

terview them, without having seen the infant observations, and come up with their own assessments. “We’ll learn something about how these experiences from early childhood get transformed in adulthood,” says another member of the team, Virginia Demos, a psychologist. “We can see what’s happening to children. But what we know so little about is how these very early experiences get transformed and become part of a life.” Samuel



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Kaplan, a psychiatrist on the team, explains: "What we hope to do is to recognize the child in the adult."

Whether or not they succeed, the Boston University team is not likely to have the last word on the significance of the infant experience. Because infancy has always been the subject of a wide range of interpretations, the interpretations themselves have social and historical meaning. Why have researchers begun to notice the infant's many talents only in the past twenty years?

Perhaps in an earlier era, when many babies died from childhood diseases, energy was focused on maintaining physical health. And because of disease, it could prove emotionally costly to view the baby as a little person. As Philippe Ariès notes in *Centuries of Childhood*, "People could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss." An 1887 baby book by a writer who called himself "Doctor Frank" made this connection dramatically clear. In his guide to child care, entitled *Health of our Children*, Doctor Frank pointed out that "half the population die under the age of five years." (According to other contemporary sources, infant mortality under five years was running nearly 37 percent in Philadelphia and 53 percent in New York City. Nationwide, the Bureau of the Census reported the mortality rate of infants under a year old, at the time Dr. Frank wrote, to be 16 percent.) Only near the end of the book, after discussions of "Diphtheria" and "Infant Life Ever in Danger," did Dr. Frank see fit to consider "Holding the Baby."

He wrote, "At this point it is well to say that quite a natural fault, and one exceedingly common, is for mothers to hold their infants altogether too much. No more wholesome advice can be given mothers than this,—hold your infants in your arms just as little as possible." Babies, Doctor Frank goes on to say, should be kept in their cribs at *all* times between feeding, washing, dressing, and outings until they are nine or ten months old!

In our time, when only about one out of a hundred children born in the United States dies before age one, the message to parents is the reverse. And when parents are told that understanding is at least as important as feeding, that babies are exquisitely tuned to every nuance in the interaction with parents, and that these interactions have long-term consequences, then parental participation in early child-rearing begins to seem critical. Jerome Kagan points out, "The belief that early experience has a profound and lasting effect on the child, wedded to the traditional attitude that the home is the best place to rear an infant, has produced reasonable caution about the possibly harmful effects of care outside the home, especially during the early, formative years."

Historically, those who argue for more parent involvement have emphasized the infant's sensitivity. Even back

in 1869, a young mother, writing in her booklet *Infant Life: Its Nurture and Care*, under the initials E.N.G., urged mothers to bathe infants themselves, rather than leave it to the nurse: "Who can do this so tenderly as the mother?" she wrote. "Surely the sympathy that exists between herself and the child will suggest more for the babe's comfort than any teaching could point out."

Like the nineteenth-century mother, T. Berry Brazelton couples his emphasis on infant competence with a plea for parent involvement. In one of his articles, Brazelton discusses the system of reciprocity between parents and their infant, and then goes on to caution, "I do worry about separation from parents before these patterns are well established and are familiar and understood by each member of the dyad or triad." The article concludes, "All of us who are interested in preserving the family as an optimal source of important experience for the vulnerable developing infant must see our goals clearly. We must be careful to provide environmental supports that reinforce the strength and rewards of reciprocal affective ties *within* the family!"

It is noteworthy that the evidence of an infant's sensitivity to his surroundings comes at a time when the rules for child-rearing—a biological father who is the breadwinner, a biological mother who is the homemaker—are being rewritten. It would be unfair to suggest, however, that the research on babies was motivated entirely by a desire to keep mothers home or even to keep the family together. The discovery of video as a tool for observing behavior, a discovery some have suggested is as important to behavioral science as the microscope was to laboratory science, certainly contributed as well. Then, too, there is a new feeling of respect abroad, in our polluted age, for what is natural and unspoiled. And what could be purer, more likely to put us in touch with natural wisdom, than the newborn baby?

In one way, at least, the latest theories make life easier for parents. They may think twice about leaving their baby in day care, but, at least when they're with the child, they don't have to feel the heavy burden of total responsibility. "I started out in the fifties," notes Brazelton, "when we were blaming parents for everything that happened to babies. And that was a counterproductive stance. Parents are *not* responsible for everything that happens to babies, because the baby is already having a pretty strong effect on his own future."

And since babies are so competent, mystified parents don't have to keep referring to the book all the time, the way they did back in the sixties. "The question parents ask me most frequently," Brazelton says, "is 'How do I know I'm doing the right thing?' I tell them, 'Watch the baby, he'll tell you.' " The baby has replaced the books as the ultimate authority. □

*Essence of a statute passed in 1660
in the Massachusetts Colony.*

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"Detuning" the F-15's engine without telling the pilots

TRouble WITH THE AIR FORCE'S EAGLE

BY JAMES FALLOWS

TWICE IN RECENT MONTHS, THESE pages have carried discussions of an Air Force fighter plane known as the "Eagle," or F-15. Last May, in "America's High-Tech Weaponry," the F-15 was used to illustrate the costs and benefits of rolling back the frontiers of technology when creating new military machines. "I Fly With the Eagles," published in November, emphasized the skills that pilots must possess to handle these aircraft—and the perils awaiting the layman who is lured into their realm.

There is a third chapter in the Eagle's saga, which connects the themes of the previous two and which figures prominently among the Air Force's current concerns. This story, which is still unfolding, begins with decisions about the performance of machines, but it leads to questions pertaining to human beings.

The machine is the F-100 engine, two of which propel every F-15. (The engine should not be confused with the F-100 fighter plane.) Another Air Force fighter, the F-16, uses a single F-100 engine. The engine is built in Connecticut by Pratt & Whitney.

The F-100 was one of several completely new systems that were incorporated in the design of the F-15 in the early 1970s, and the properties of the new engine were crucial to the hopes for the Eagle's performance. The engine's virtue was its extremely high thrust-to-weight ratio; while one engine added 3,000 pounds to the weight of the plane, each F-100 was (according to initial plans) supposed to generate 23,800 pounds of thrust. When two such engines were mounted on an aircraft whose total weight was about 40,000 pounds, the result was a plane whose overall thrust-to-weight ratio was

greater than one, which was supposed to make the Eagle more maneuverable than any other plane and faster than most. Its proponents said that the F-15 would be America's answer to a new generation of Soviet planes.

But to wring such high propulsion from so light an engine, the F-100's designers were knocking at the limits of materials and of engineering almost everywhere they turned. A modern jet "turbofan" engine, such as the F-100, takes in air through inlets at the front and then compresses it to very high pressures through a series of "compressor stages," which are essentially fans all pointed in the same direction. In the F-100's case, the air is compressed to pressures about twenty-three times greater than when it enters the engine. Then it is combined with jet fuel and explosively ignited. The resulting jet of exhaust is directed out the rear of the engine, where it provides the thrust for the plane. On its way out, it passes through a series of turbine blades and turns them, as wind turns a windmill. The energy consumed in turning the blades is subtracted from the thrust that goes out the rear of the engine, but the energy of the turbines' rotation is conveyed to the front of the engine, where it drives the compressor stages that keep the engine running.

In designing such an engine, engineers must make trade-offs among a number of complicated and sometimes opposing values, including the compression ratio and the operating temperature, in the hope of producing the optimum balance between fuel consumption and thrust. "The result," according to two Air Force officers, Major Charles L. Fox and Lt. Colonel Dino A. Lorenzini, who wrote about the F-100 in the *Naval War College Review* two years ago, "was a design that indeed gave the pilot every possible ounce of performance." They continued, "However, the last few ounces were purchased at the price of

persistent stagnation stall problems and engine operating temperatures so high as to degrade considerably the F-100's durability."

The "stagnation" and "stall" problems the officers referred to arose from a disturbance in the flow of air through the engine. The compressor fans at the front of the F-100 may be thought of as a number of small airfoils—like little airplane wings or propeller blades—that "fly" in a circular path around the fan's hub. Instead of providing "lift" for the entire aircraft, as wings do, these airfoils "lift" wind backward into the engine. All airfoils derive their power from the difference in curvature between top and bottom surfaces, which forces the air to flow at different rates past those surfaces. Up to a point, the airfoils provide increasing lift as the air flows past them at a more extreme angle. But when the "angle of attack" becomes too great, the flow of air is disturbed and the airfoil's lift disappears. If this happens to the wings, the plane stops flying and starts falling out of the sky. If it happens to the blades of the compressor fan, the engine suffers a stagnation or stall. The F-100 proved to be unusually susceptible to these mishaps when turbulent air flowed into the engine, as was the case during certain aerial maneuvers.

In the extreme version, a stagnation, the entire engine can run down to a halt. Stalls are momentary coughs or hesitations in the engine's performance, as one portion of a fan is affected. In both cases, the flow of air into the engine is choked off. The flow of fuel continues; the reduced air supply is still enough to support combustion but not to cool the engine. As a result, the engine's temperature soars. This sudden "spike" of heat, which can take turbine blades to the temperatures at which they weaken or melt, is thought to be one of the main reasons the F-100's turbine blades wear out so fast.

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THE DELICATE NATURE OF THE F-100 was evident from the start. In 1973, the F-100s that Pratt & Whitney submitted to the Air Force failed to meet a standard durability requirement. The officer who was then managing the project, General Ben Bellis, attracted publicity by deciding to waive the requirement and accept the engines. Pratt & Whitney had proposed that they take more time to test the engine's durability, by mounting an F-100 beneath a test plane and flying it for extended periods. General Bellis had rejected that proposal as too costly and time-consuming. In the years since then, the focus of practical concern about the F-100 has been its appetite for turbine blades. The blades, which range from three to ten inches long, now cost an average of more than \$500 apiece. (There are 268 blades in every engine.) Apart from the expense of replacing them, the Air Force found that it was burning up the blades faster than they could be made. By the late 1970s, turbine-blade producers were straining to meet commercial and military demands. As one response to the turbine-blade problems and the rapid flow of F-

100s into the repair shop because of stalls and overheating, the Air Force ordered a change in its maintenance procedures that led to the engines being "detuned."

Detuning, also known as "trimming down," or "turning down the wick," means adjusting an engine so that it burns at a lower temperature. This eases the wear and tear on the turbine blades, but it also reduces the thrust that the engine had originally been designed to maximize. The detuning took place in two stages, one in 1976 and another in 1979. The first step reduced the engine thrust by about 5 percent. According to the Air Force, the second step was taken principally to save time during the tuning procedure. The Air Force's official claim, considered optimistic by several pilots and aircraft designers with whom I spoke, is that the second detuning lowered the thrust of the average engine by another 2 percent, and by 5 percent in some cases.

Because of the formula used to determine an airplane's ability to accelerate (acceleration equals the thrust of the engine minus the drag of the plane, divided by its mass), small differences in

thrust can be magnified into large differences in acceleration when the aircraft in question is one like the F-15, whose drag at high speeds is very great. Beyond that, there were indications that the F-100's performance had fallen off by more than was officially claimed. F-15 pilots routinely fly against "aggressor" pilots in F-5s, much smaller and lighter planes that simulate the role of Russian fighters. The F-5 costs about a fourth as much as the F-15 and requires less maintenance; its top speed is supposed to be 1.6 times the speed of sound, as opposed to 2.5 times for the F-15. Yet in a number of exercises, pilots noticed that at certain altitudes and airspeeds the F-15s were no longer able to out-accelerate the F-5s.

The most noticeable rumblings of protest came from Nellis Air Force Base, in Nevada, where some of the Air Force's best pilots train at the Fighter Weapons School. In drag races last year at Nellis, the F-15 was eventually overtaken by the older F-4 Phantom jet, which the Eagle theoretically should have out-classed. In one case, according to reports from Nellis, when an F-100 engine was placed on the test stand, its thrust

proved to be 17,000 pounds—or 29 percent lower than the original standards. There was a wide variation in performance from plane to plane and engine to engine. There was another engine problem even more worrisome to pilots: the F-100, designed to burn smoke-free, was beginning to emit the smoke trails that pilots regard as a grave handicap in aerial combat.

In July, Major General Jack Gregory, the commander of the test range at Nellis, sent a letter reflecting his pilots' complaints to the Air Force's Tactical Air Command. By that time, Pratt & Whitney and McDonnell Douglas, which is the principal contractor for the F-15, were well aware that they had a problem; along with the Tactical Air Command and the Air Force Systems Command, they were investigating its origins. They did little, however, to publicize the inquiry, even within the military, until Bruce Ingersoll, of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and John Fialka and Walter Mossberg, of the *Wall Street Journal*, broke the story of the pilots' complaints early in October.

THE DIFFICULTIES AFFECTING THE F-100 obviously underscored the gap that separates the ideal from the real on the frontiers of military technology. Many modern military systems exact high prices, not only in dollars but in day-to-day reliability, for capabilities that are supposed to make a dramatic difference in military effectiveness. In practice, the real items sometimes fall short. No one claims to be exactly sure what has happened to the F-100; yet another factor seems to be that adjustable "vaness" in the rear compressor, which are supposed to direct the flow of air for maximum efficiency, have worked loose in their lightweight titanium bearings, further reducing the engine's thrust. There is even some doubt about whether the problems are confined to the engines, or whether the airframe design may be involved in some way. All that is certain is that the \$20-million-plus airplane in the fleet in 1982 is not the one advertised to Congress, the public, and the pilots ten years earlier.

Yet in some parts of the Air Force, a

harsher lesson is drawn from this episode. It is based on the fact that when the Air Force leadership decided to detune the engines and degrade their performance, *nobody told the pilots*.

The vehicle for informing the pilots would have been the performance charts in the pilots' flight handbooks that describe the airplane's characteristics and capabilities at various altitudes and speeds and when conducting different maneuvers. From the charts the pilot learns the airplane's range as well as the performance he can expect during combat maneuvers. Inaccurate data leads the pilot to think that he can do things he cannot do, and that he enjoys an advantage while making maneuvers that may mean his destruction. The F-15 pilot would expect on the basis of his charts that in combat against certain fighters he could suddenly dash to overtake—or break away from—the other plane. But the detuned plane he was flying would not allow him to escape.

I spoke by phone with pilots at three of the bases where F-15s operate. None would be quoted by name, because of the sensitivity of the issue within the Air Force; most affirmed their overall enthusiasm for the Eagle as a "real fine plane." But nearly all expressed sentiments like those of a pilot at Nellis: "If they're going to make the changes, they damn well better tell me about it, because I'm going to rely on it in a fight."

Of course, the most experienced pilots had already figured out that they could not rely on the handbooks. They learned from their own exercises what they could and could not do. Before a squadron of Eagles was sent to Germany for exercises in 1980, its members conducted cross-country flights to see what the plane's range actually was and where they would need to refuel en route. In terms of peril to life and limb, the F-15's smoky engine would probably be a more serious handicap in combat than the misleading charts. But it hardly increases the pilots' faith in their leadership to learn that they cannot trust the information officially provided.

Why weren't the pilots told? Colonel Gerald Blake, who became head of the F-15 program just in time to answer

questions about the detuning, told the *Wall Street Journal* that "a lot of pilots were simply not aware of that. We'll take the hit in that area." Lt. General Tom McMullen, the vice-commander of the Tactical Air Command, told me that because the detuning was such a "gradual" process, and "because we didn't realize it had gone as far as it had," the Air Force did not change the manuals. (A project to rewrite them is under way.)

There is an alternative hypothesis within the Air Force, which holds that political arguments had as much to do with the F-100 misadventure as did any technical considerations. The F-15 carries, in addition to missiles, a great deal of political freight. In the Air Force, enthusiasm for the plane is sometimes indistinguishable from loyalty to the nation. It is an inconvenient fact for the pro-Eagle group, which includes most of the service's leadership, that a newer, lighter, and cheaper plane called the F-16 has been far freer of engine problems, even though it also uses the F-100. One possible explanation for the difference is that the F-16 is, and was designed to be, light enough to be quite speedy and maneuverable with just one engine—and its single engine's inlet location, under the belly of the plane, is inherently less susceptible to turbulent air flow than are the inlets for the F-15's twin engines, which are mounted on the sides. Some people in the Force consider it no accident that the Air Force issued charts that overstated the F-15's capabilities. They point out that the F-16's performance charts, some of them based on estimates, were adjusted to reflect the results of the first round of detuning in 1976, which applied to F-100 engines used in both planes. (The F-16 engines were not detuned the second time, because they were not creating the severe repair problems that the F-15s were.) The F-15's charts, however, also based on estimates, were not changed to reflect the detuning.

But to accept this hypothesis would be to conclude that leaders placed loyalty to their machines above loyalty to their pilots. That is a conclusion so distasteful that most are compelled to reject it. □

THE OVERCOAT II

A SHORT STORY BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE



THERE WAS A COMMOTION NEAR THE HEAD OF THE queue, people shouting, elbowing one another, wedging themselves in and bracing for the inevitable shock wave that would pulse through the line, tumbling children, pregnant women, and unsuspecting old pensioners like dominoes. Akaky craned his neck to see what was happening, but he already knew: they were running out of meat. Two and a half hours on line for a lump of gristly beef to flavor his kasha and cabbage, nearly a hundred people ahead of him and Lenin knew how many behind, and they had to go and run out.

It was no surprise. The same thing had happened three days ago, last week, last month, last year. A cynic might have been led to grumble, to disparage the farmers, the truckers, the butchers and butchers' assistants, to question their mental capacity and cast aspersions on their ancestry. But not Akaky. No, he was as patient and enduring as the lines along the Boulevard Ring, and he knew how vital personal sacrifice was to the Soviet Socialist workers' struggle against the forces of Imperialism and Capitalist Exploitation. He knew, because he had been told. Every day. As a boy in school, as an adolescent in the Young Pioneers, as an adult in on-the-job political-orientation sessions. He read it in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, heard it on the radio, watched it on TV. Whizz, whir, clack-clack-clack: the voice of Lenin was playing like a tape recording inside his head. "Working People of the Soviet Union! Struggle for a Communist attitude toward labor. Hold public property sacred and multiply it!"

"Meat," cried a voice behind him. He squirmed round in disbelief—how could anyone be so insensitive as to voice a complaint in public?—and found himself staring down at the shriveled husk of an old woman, less than five feet tall, her babushkaed head mummy-wrapped against the cold. She was ancient, older than the Revolution, a living artifact escaped from the Museum of Serf Art. Akaky's mouth dropped open; the word "Comrade" was flying to

his lips in gentle remonstrance when the man in front of him, impelled by the estuarine wash of the crowd, drove him up against the old woman with all the force of a runaway tram. Akaky clutched at her shoulders for balance, but she was ready for him, lowering her head and catching him neatly in the breastbone with the rock-hard bun in the crown of her kerchief. It was as if he had been shot. He couldn't breathe, tried to choke out an apology, found himself on the pavement beneath a flurry of unsteady feet. The old woman towered over him, her face as stolid and impassive as the monumental bust of Lenin at the Party Congress. "Meat," she cried, "meat!"

Akaky stayed on another quarter of an hour, until a cordon of policemen marched up the street and superintended the closing of the store. It was 9:00 P.M. Akaky was beat. He had been standing in one line or another since 5:30, when he left the ministry where he worked as file clerk, and all he had to show for it was eight russet potatoes, half a dozen onions, and twenty-six tubes of Czechoslovakian toothpaste he had been lucky enough to blunder across while looking for a bottle of rubbing alcohol. Resigned, he started across the vacant immensity of Red Square on his way to Herzen Street and the Krasnaya Presnya district, where he shared a communal apartment with two families and another bachelor. Normally he lingered a bit when crossing the great Square, reveling in the majesty of it all—from the massive blank face of the Kremlin wall to the Oriental spires of Pokrovsky Cathedral—but now he hurried, uncommonly stung by the cold.

One foot after the next, a sharp echo in the chill immensity, ice in his nostrils, his shoulders rattling with the cold that clutched at him like a hand. What was it: twenty, twenty-five below? Why did it seem so much colder tonight? Was he coming down with something? One foot after the next, rap-rap-rap, and then he realized what it was: the overcoat. Of course. The lining had begun to come loose, peeling back in clumps as if it were an animal with the mange; he had noticed it that morning, in the anteroom at the office—balls of felt dusting his shoes and trouser cuffs like snow. The coat was worthless, and he

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had been a fool to buy it in the first place. But what else was there? He had gone to the Central Department Store in response to a notice in the window: Good Quality Soviet-Made Winter Coats—at a price he could afford. He remembered being puzzled over the shortness and sparseness of the line, and over the clerk's bemused expression as he handed him the cloth coat. "You don't want this," the clerk had said. The man was Akaky's age, moustachioed. He was grinning.

Akaky had been puzzled. "I don't?"

"Soviet means shoddy," the man said, cocky as one of the American delinquents Akaky saw rioting on the televised news each night.

Akaky's face went red. He didn't like the type of person who made light of official slogans—in this case, "Soviet Means Superior"—and he was always shocked and embarrassed when he ran across one of these smug apostates.

The man rubbed his thumb and forefinger together. "I have something really nice here, well-made, stylish, a coat that will hold up for years after this *shtampny* is in the rubbish heap. If you want to meet me out back, I think I can, ah, arrange something for you—if you see what I mean?"

The shock and outrage that had seized Akaky at that moment were like an electric jolt, like the automatic response governed by electrodes implanted in the brains of dogs and monkeys at the State Lab. He flushed to the apex of his bald spot. "How dare you insinuate—" he sputtered, and then choked off, too wrought up to continue. Turning away from the clerk in disgust, he snatched up the first overcoat at random and strode briskly away to join the swollen queue on the payment line.

And so, he was the owner of a shabby, worthless garment that fit him about as snugly as a circus tent. The lining was in tatters and the seam under the right arm gaped like an open wound. He should have been more cautious, he should have controlled his emotions and come back another day. Now, as he hurried up Herzen Street, reflexively clutching his shoulders, he told himself that he would go to see Petrovich the tailor in the morning. A stitch here, a stitch there, maybe a reinforced lining, and the thing would be good as new. Who cared if it was ill-fitting and outdated? He was no fashion plate.

Yes, he thought, Petrovich. Petrovich in the morning.

AKAKY WAS UP AT SEVEN THE NEXT MORNING, THE faintly sour odor of a meatless potato-onion soup lingering in unexpected places, the room numb with cold. It was dark, of course, dark till 9:00 A.M. this time of year, and then dark again at 2:30 in the afternoon. He dressed by candlelight, folded up the bed, and heated some kasha and spoiled milk for breakfast. Normally he had breakfast in his corner of the kitchen, but this morning he used the tiny camp stove in his room, reluctant to march down the hallway and disturb the Romanovs, the

Yeroshkins, or old Studniuk. As he slipped out the door ten minutes later, he could hear Irina Yeroshkin berating her husband in her penny-whistle voice: "Up, Sergei, you drunken lout. Get up. The factory, Sergei. Remember, Sergei? Work? You remember what that is?"

It was somewhere around thirty below, give or take a degree. Akaky was wearing two sweaters over his standard brown-serge suit (the office wags called it turdbrown), and still the cold made him dance. If it was any consolation, the streets were alive with other dancers, shudders, sprinters, and vaulters, all in a delirious headlong rush to get back inside before they shattered like cheap glass. Akaky was not consoled. His throat was raw and his eyelids crusted over by the time he flung himself into Petrovich's shop like Zhivago escaped from the Red partisans.

Petrovich was sitting beneath a single brown light bulb in a heap of rags and scraps of cloth, the antique pedal sewing machine rising up out of the gloom beside him like an iron monster. He was drunk. Eight o'clock in the morning, and he was drunk. "Well, well, well," he boomed, "an early customer, eh? What's it this time, Akaky Akakievich, your cuffs unraveling again?" And then he was laughing, choking away like a tubercular horse.

Akaky didn't approve of drinking. He lived a quiet, solitary existence (as solitary as the six Yeroshkin brats would allow), very rarely had occasion to do any social drinking, and saw no reason to drink alone. Sure, he had a shot of vodka now and again to ward off the cold, and he had tasted champagne once when his sister had gotten married, but in general he found drinking repugnant and always got a bit tongue-tied and embarrassed in the presence of someone under the influence. "I, I, I was, uh, wondering if—"

"Spit it out," Petrovich roared. The tailor had lost an eye when he was eighteen, in the Hungarian police action—he'd poked his head up through the top hatch of his tank and a Magyar patriot had nailed him with a dexterously flung stone—and his good eye, as if in compensation, seemed to have grown to inhuman proportions. He fixed Akaky with this bulging, protoplasmic mass and cleared his throat.

"—wondering if you could, ah, patch up the lining of my, ah, overcoat."

"Trash," Petrovich said.

Akaky held the coat open like an exhibitionist. "Look: it's not really that bad, just peeling back a little. Maybe you could, ah, reinforce the lining and—"

"Trash, *shtampny*, brak. You're wearing a piece of Soviet-bungled garbage, a fishnet, rotten through to the very thread of the seams. I can't fix it."

"But—"

"I won't. It wouldn't last you the winter. Nope. The only thing to do is go out and get something decent."

"Petrovich." Akaky was pleading. "I can't afford a new coat. This one cost me over a month's salary as it is."

The tailor had produced a bottle of vodka. He winked his eye closed in ecstasy as he took a long pull at the neck of it. When he righted his head he seemed to have trouble focusing on Akaky, addressing himself to a point in space six feet to the left of him. "I'll make you one," he said, pounding at his rib cage and belching softly. "Down-lined, fur collar. Like they wear in Paris."

"But, but . . . I can't afford a coat like that—"

"What are you going to do, freeze? Listen, Akaky Akakievich, you couldn't get a coat like this for five hundred rubles on the black market."

Black market. The words made Akaky cringe, as if the tailor had spouted some vile epithet: faggot, pederast, or CIA. The black market was flourishing; oh, yes, he knew all about it, all about the self-centered capitalist revisionists who sold out the motherland for a radio or a pair of blue jeans or—or an overcoat. "Never," he said. "I'd rather wear rags."

"Hey, hey; calm down, Akaky, calm down. I said I *could* get you one, not that I would. No, for five-fifty I'll make you one."

Five hundred and fifty rubles. Nearly three months' salary. It was steep, it was outrageous. But what else could he do? Go back to the department store for another piece of junk that would fall apart in a year? He stepped back into the tailor's line of vision. "Are you absolutely sure you can't fix this one?"

Petrovich shook his massive head. "No way."

"All right," Akaky said, his voice a whisper. "When could you have it done?"

"One week from today."

"One week? Isn't that awfully fast work?"

The tailor grinned at him, and winked his bloated eye. "I have my methods," he said. "Rely on me."



AT THE OFFICE THAT MORNING, WHILE HE CROUCHED shuddering over the radiator in his worn overcoat, ragged sweaters, and standard brown-serge suit, Akaky became aware of a disturbance at his back: strident whispers, giggling, derisive laughter. He turned to look up into the grinning, wet-lipped faces of two of the younger clerks. They were wearing leather flight jackets with fur collars and blue jeans stamped prominently with the name of an American Jewish manufacturer, and they were staring at him. The shorter one, the blond, tossed his head arrogantly and made an obscene comment, something to do with mothers, sexual intercourse, and Akaky's Soviet-made overcoat. Then he put a finger to his head in a mock salute and sauntered through the main door, close-

ly tailed by his tall cohort. Akaky was puzzled at first, then outraged. Finally, he felt ashamed. Was he really such a sight? Shoulders hunched, he ducked down the hallway to the lavatory and removed overcoat and sweaters in the privacy of one of the stalls.

Akaky took his afternoon break in the window of a gloomy downstairs hallway rather than endure the noisy, overcrowded workers' cafeteria. He munched a dry onion sandwich (he hadn't seen butter in weeks), drank weak tea from a thermos, and absently scanned the *Izvestia* headlines: RECORD GRAIN HARVEST; KAMA RIVER TRUCK PLANT TRIPLES OUTPUT; AMERICAN NEGROES RIOT. When he got back to his desk he knew immediately that something was wrong—he sensed it, and yet he couldn't quite put a finger on it. The others were watching him; he looked up, they looked down. What was it? Everything was in place on his desk—the calendar, the miniature of Misha the Olympic bear, his citation from the Revolutionary Order of United Soviet File Clerks for his twenty-five years of continuous service . . . and then it occurred to him: he was late. He had dozed over lunch, and now he was late getting back to his desk.

Frantic, he jerked round to look at the clock, and saw in that instant both that he was as punctual as ever and that a terrible, shaming transformation had come over the life-size statue of Lenin that presided over the room like a guardian angel. Someone, some jokester, some flunky, had appropriated Akaky's overcoat and draped it over the statue's shoulders. This was too much. The bastards, the thoughtless, insensitive bastards. Akaky was on his feet, his face splotched with humiliation and anger. "How could you?" he shouted out. A hundred heads looked up. "Comrades: how could you do this to me?"

They were laughing. All of them. Even Turpentov and Moronov, so drunk they could barely lift their heads, even Rodion Mishkin, who sometimes played a game of chess with him over lunch. What was wrong with them? Was poverty a laughing matter? The overcoat clung to Lenin's shoulder like a growth, the underarm torn away, a long, tangled string of felt depending from the skirts like a tail. Akaky strode across the room, mounted the pedestal, and retrieved his coat. "What is it with you?" he spluttered. "We're all proletarians, aren't we?" For some reason, this fired up the laughter again, a wave of it washing over the room like surf. The blond tough, the punk, was smirking at him from the safety of his desk across the room; Moronov was jeering from beneath his red, vodka-swollen nose. "Citizens!" Akaky cried. "Comrades!" No effect. And then, shot through with rage and shame and bewilderment, he shouted as he had never shouted in his life, roared like an animal in a cage: "Brothers!" he bellowed.

The room fell silent. They seemed stunned at his loss of control, amazed to see that this little man who for twenty-five years had been immovable, staid as a statue, was made of flesh and blood after all. Akaky didn't know what he was doing. He stood there, the coat in one hand, the

other clutching Lenin's shoulder for support. And then all at once something came over him—he suddenly felt heroic, an orator, felt he could redeem himself with words, shame them with a spontaneous speech, take to the pulpit like one of the Revolutionary sailors of the *Potemkin*. “Brothers,” he said more softly, “don’t you realize—”

There was a rude noise from the far side of the room. It was the blond tough, razzing him. The tall one took it up—his accomplice—and then Turpentov, and in an instant they were all laughing and jeering again. Akaky stepped down from the pedestal and walked out the door.



AS ROOMS GO—EVEN IN APARTMENT-STARVED Moscow—Akaky’s was pretty small, perhaps half a size larger than the one that drove Raskolnikov to murder. Actually, it was the foyer of the gloomy four-room apartment he shared with the eight Yeroshkins, five Romanovs, and old Studniuk. The room’s main drawback, of course, was that anyone entering or leaving the apartment had to troop through it: Sergei Yeroshkin, on the tail end of a three-day drunk; Olga Romanov, necking with her boyfriend at the door while a whistling draft howled through the room and Akaky tried fitfully to sleep; old Studniuk’s ancient, unsteady cronies lurching through the door like elephants on their way to the burial ground. It was intolerable. Or at least it would have been had Akaky given it any thought. But it never occurred to him to question his lot in life or to demand that he and Studniuk switch rooms on a rotating basis or to go out and look for more amenable living quarters. He was no whining, soft-in-the-middle bourgeois, he was a hard-nosed Revolutionary Communist worker and an exemplary citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. When industrial production goals were met, the Party leaders would turn their attention to housing. Until then, there was no sense in complaining. Besides, if he really wanted privacy, he could duck into the coat closet.

Now, coming up the steps and into the still, darkened apartment, Akaky felt like an intruder in his own home. It was 2:15 in the afternoon. He hadn’t been home at this hour in thirteen years, since the time he had come down with a double attack of influenza and bronchitis, and Mother Gorbanyevskaya (she’d had Studniuk’s room then) had nursed him with lentil soup and herb tea. He closed the door on silence: the place was deserted, the dying rays of the sun suffusing the walls with a soft, eerie light, the samovar a lurking presence, shadows in the corners like spies and traducers. Without a pause, Akaky unfolded his bed, undressed, and pulled the covers up over

his head. He had never felt more depressed and uncertain in his life: the injustice of it, the pettiness. He was a good man, true to the ideals of the Revolution, a generous man, inoffensive, meek: why did they have to make him their whipping boy? What had he done?

His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of a key turning in the lock. What now? he thought, stealing a glance at the door. The lock rattled, the bolt slid back, and old Studniuk was standing there in the doorway, blinking in bewilderment, a swollen string bag over his shoulder. “Akaky Akakievich?” he said. “Is that you?”

From beneath the blankets, Akaky grunted in assent.

“Blessed Jesus,” the old man shouted, “what is it: have you gone rotten in the stomach, is that it? Have you had an accident?” Studniuk had shut the door and was standing over the bed now; Akaky could feel the old man’s trembling fingertips on the bedspread. “Talk to me, Akaky Akakievich—are you all right? Should I call a doctor?”

Akaky sat up. “No, no, Trifly Vladimirovich, no need. I’m ill, that’s all. It will pass.”

With a crack of his ancient knees, old Studniuk lowered himself to the corner of the bed and peered anxiously into Akaky’s face. The string bag lay at his feet, bulging with cabbages, carrots, cheese, butter, bread, bottles of milk, and squarish packages wrapped in butcher’s paper. After a long moment, the old man pulled a pouch of tobacco from his shirt pocket and began to roll a cigarette. “You don’t look sick,” he said.

All his life, Akaky had put a premium on truthfulness. When he was fifteen and assistant treasurer of the Young Pioneers, two of his co-workers had misappropriated the funds from a collection drive and no one in the group would expose them until Akaky came forward. The group leader had given him a citation for Revolutionary rectitude, which he still kept in a box with his school diploma and a photograph of his mother at the Tolstoy Museum. He looked Studniuk in the eye. “No,” he said, “I’m not sick. Not physically, anyway.”

The old man rolled another cigarette with his clonic fingers, tucked the finished product behind his ear with the first, and produced a handkerchief the size of a dish towel. He thoughtfully plumbed his nostrils while Akaky, in a broken voice, narrated the sad tale of his humiliation at the office. When Akaky was finished, the old man carefully folded up the handkerchief, tucked it in his shirt pocket, and extracted a paring knife from his sleeve. He cut the rind from a round of cheese and began sucking at bits of it while slowly shaking his head back and forth. After a while he said, “I’ve got some advice for you.”

Studniuk was the patriarch of the apartment complex, ageless, a man who didn’t have to look at newsreels to see history: it played in his head. He had been there. For fifty-two years he had worked at the First State Bearing Plant, present at its opening, a face in the crowd while successive generations of leaders came and went—Keren-

sky, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Khrushchev. No one knew how old he was, nor how he managed to live so well. He was jaunty, big-shouldered, bald as a fire hydrant; his nose had been broken so many times it looked like a question mark. Suddenly he was laughing, a sound like wind in the grass.

"You know," the old man said, fighting for control, "you're a good man, Akaky Akakievich, but you're an ass." Studniuk looked him full in the face, as hard and squint-eyed as a snapping turtle. "An ass," he repeated. "Don't you know that nobody gives half a shit about all this Party business anymore? Huh? Are you blind, son, or what? Where do you think I got all this?" he said, nodding at the sack of food with a belligerent jerk of his neck.

Akaky felt as if he had been slapped in the face. The words were on his lips—"Betrayer. Backslider"—but the old man cut him off. "Yes, that's right: wheeling and dealing on the black market. And you're a damn fool and an ass if you don't go out there and get everything you can, because it's for shit sure no comrade commissioner is going to come round and give it to you."

"Get out of my room, Studniuk," Akaky said, his heart pounding wildly at his rib cage. "I'm sorry. But please, get out."

Wearily, the old man got to his feet and gathered up his things. He hesitated in the hallway, the ravaged nose glowing in the shadows like something made of luminescent wax. "I'll tell you why they hate you, Akaky Akakievich. You want to know why? Because you're a stick-in-the-mud, because you're a holier-than-thou, because you're a Party tool, that's why. Because you go around in that goddamned flapping overcoat like a saint or something, that's why." The old man shook his head, then turned and receded into the gloom of the hallway.

Akaky didn't hear him leave. He was biting his lip and pressing his hands to his ears with a fierce, unrelenting pressure, with the strict, stoic rectitude of saints and martyrs and Revolutionary heroes.

PETROVICH WAS TRUE TO HIS WORD: THE OVERCOAT was ready in a week. It was a week to the day, in fact, that Akaky appeared at the tailor's shop, full of misgivings and clutching a wad of ruble notes as if he expected them to wriggle through his fingers like worms or sprout wings and flutter up in his face. He had exhausted his savings and sold his antique Tovstonogov Star TV set to come up with the money, a real hardship, considering how inflexible his budget was. (For the past twenty-two years he had been sending half of each paycheck to his invalid mother in the Urals. It seemed there had been some sort of mysterious calamity in the area and the authorities had had to relocate her entire village. Ever since, she had been pale and listless, her hair had fallen out, and she complained that her bones felt as if they had gone hollow, like a bird's.) The tailor was expecting him. "Akaky

Akakievich," he shouted, rubbing his hands together and ushering him into the shop, "come in, come in."

Akaky shook Petrovich's hand and then stood uneasily in the center of the shop while the tailor ducked into the back room to fetch the coat. Left alone, Akaky found himself surveying the place with a discerning eye, as if it were the shop he was buying and not merely an overcoat. The place was shabby, no question about it. Cracks rent the plaster like fault lines, soiled rags and odd scraps of cloth puddled up round his ankles like the aftermath of an explosion in a textile plant, a dish of roach poison glistened in the corner, riddled with the yellow husks of dead and dying insects. Could a man who worked in such squalor produce anything worthwhile?—anything worth five hundred and fifty rubles?

There was a rustle of wrapping paper and Petrovich was at his side, holding out a loosely wrapped package in both arms, as if it were an offering. Akaky felt his stomach sink. The tailor swept an armful of half-finished garments to the floor and laid the package on the table. It was wrapped in soft white tissue paper, the sort of paper one saw at Christmas, but then only in the store windows. Akaky reached out to touch it, and the tailor swept back the paper with a flourish.

Akaky was stunned. He was staring down at the overcoat of a prince, as fine as the one the Secretary himself wore, so handsome it was almost indecent. "You can't—" he began, but he couldn't find the words.

"Camel's hair," Petrovich said, winking his enormous eye. "That's genuine fox, that collar. And look at the lining."

Akaky looked. The lining was quilted with down.

"You don't think you'll be warm in that?" Petrovich said, breathing vodka fumes in his face and nudging him. "Eh, Akaky Akakievich, eh?"

It's such a small thing, an overcoat, a necessity of life—what's to be so excited about? Akaky told himself as he slid into the coat and followed Petrovich into the back room to stand before the speckled mirror. What he saw reflected there drove the last vestige of composure from his body . . . he looked . . . magnificent, dignified, like a member of the Politburo or manager of the National Hotel, like one of the bigwigs themselves. He couldn't help himself, he was grinning, he was beaming.

A KAKY WAS LATE TO WORK THAT MORNING FOR THE first time in anyone's memory. He strolled in at quarter past the hour, as though oblivious of the time, nodding benignly at this clerk or that. What was even more remarkable, from his fellow clerks' point of view, was the way he was dressed: they recognized the cracked, imitation-vinyl gloves, the standard brown-serge trousers, and the great woolly black hat that clung to his head like an inflated rodent—but the overcoat, the fox-trimmed camel's hair overcoat, really threw them. Was

this Akaky A. Bashmachkin, Party tool and office drudge, strutting through the corridors like a coryphée with the Bolshoi, like an Olympic shot-putter, like one of the *apparatchiki*? Had he been elevated to a supervisory position, was that it? Had he come into a fortune, held up a bank? A few heads turned toward the door, half-expecting a cordon of KGB men to burst in and lead him away in disgrace.

No one had said a word to Akaky since the incident of a week before, but now, with furtive glances over their shoulders for the supervisor, Turpentov, Moronov, and Volodya Smelyakov—the elder statesman of the office, hoary-headed, toothless, and two months from retirement—gathered round Akaky's desk. "Good morning, Akaky Akakievich," Moronov slurred, his tongue already thickening from his morning pick-me-up, "nice day, isn't it?" Moronov's eyes were red as a pearl diver's. Beyond the windows the sky was like steel wool, the wind was raging, and the temperature was rapidly plunging from a high of minus 28°.

Akaky had no reason to be cordial to Moronov, nor did he approve of his drinking, but instead of fixing him with his usual bland and vaguely disapproving stare, he smiled, the upper lip drawing back from his teeth as if by the operation of some hidden, uncontrollable force. He couldn't help it. He felt marvelous, felt like a new man, and not even Moronov, not even the jeering blond tough, could sour his mood. The fact was, he was late because he had lingered on the streets, despite the cold, to examine his reflection in shop windows and try out his new magnanimous big shot's grin on strangers in Red Square. On a whim, he had stopped in at a tourist shop for an outrageously overpriced cup of coffee and sweet bun. So what if he was late one morning out of five thousand? Would the world collapse round him?

Old man Smelyakov cleared his throat and smacked his gums amicably. "Well, well, well," he said in the voice of a throttled bird, "what a lovely, lovely, ah"—the word seemed to stick in his throat—"overcoat you have there, Akaky Akakievich."

"Yes," Akaky said, slipping out of the coat and hanging it reverently on the hook beside the desk, "yes, it is." Then he sat down and began shuffling through a sheaf of papers.

Turpentov tugged at his knuckles. His voice was harsh, like a great whirring mill saw bogged down in a knotty log. "You wouldn't want to trust that to the workers' cloakroom, now would you?" he said, making a stab at jocularity. "I mean, it's so ritzy and all, so expensive-looking."

Akaky never even glanced up. He was already cranking the first report into his antiquated Rostov Bear typewriter. "No," he said, "no, I wouldn't."

During the afternoon break, Akaky took his lunch amid the turmoil of the workers' cafeteria, rather than in the solitary confines of the lower hallway. On the way in the door he had nearly run head-on into the surly blond youth

and had stiffened, expecting some sort of verbal abuse, but the blond merely looked away and went about his business. Akaky found a spot at one of the long imitation-Formica tables and was almost immediately joined by Rodion Mishkin, his sometime chess partner, who squeezed in beside him with a lunch box in one hand and a copy of *Novy Mir* in the other. Mishkin was a thin, nervous man in wire-rimmed spectacles, who carried a circular yellow patch of hardened skin on his cheek like a badge and looked as if he should be lecturing on molecular biology at the Academy of Sciences. He had a habit of blowing on his fingertips as he spoke, as if he had just burned them or applied fresh nail polish. "Well," he said with a sigh as he eased down on the bench and removed a thickly buttered sausage sandwich from his lunch box, "so you've finally come round, Akaky Akakievich."

"What do you mean?" Akaky said.

"Oh, come on, Akaky, don't be coy."

"Really, Rodion Ivanovich, I have no idea what you're talking about."

Mishkin was grinning broadly, his gold fillings glistening in the light, grinning as if he and Akaky had just signed some nefarious pact together. "The overcoat, Akaky, the overcoat."

"Do you like it?"

Mishkin blew on his fingers. "It's first-rate."

Akaky was grinning now too. "You wouldn't believe it—I had it custom-made, but I suppose you can see that in the lines and the distinction of it. A tailor I know, lives in squalor, but he put it together for me in less than a week."

It was as if Mishkin's fingertips had suddenly exploded in flame: he was puffing vigorously at them and waving his hands from the wrist. "Oh, come off it, Akaky—you don't have to put on a show for me," he said, simultaneously flailing his fingers and nudging Akaky with a complicitous elbow.

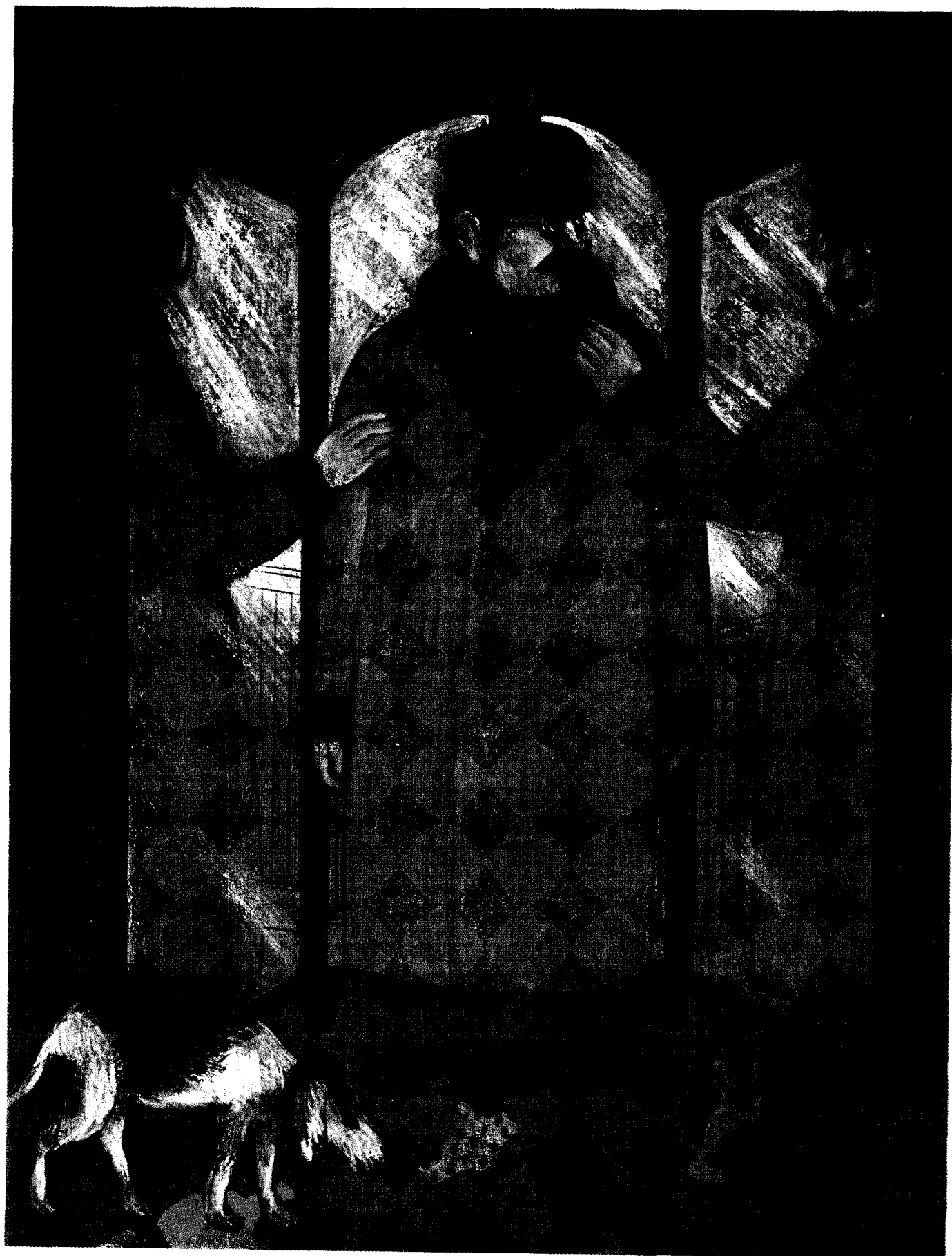
"It's the truth," Akaky said. And then: "Well, I guess it wouldn't be fair to say *less* than a week—it took him a full seven days, actually."

"All right, all right," Mishkin snapped, bending to his sandwich, "have it any way you want. I don't mean to pry."

Puzzled at his friend's behavior, Akaky looked up to see that a number of heads were turned toward them. He concentrated on his sandwich: raw turnip and black bread, dry.

"Listen," Mishkin said after a while, "Masha and I are having a few people from the office over tonight—for some dinner and talk, maybe a hand or two at cards. Want to join us?"

Akaky never went out at night. Tickets to sporting events, films, concerts, and the ballet were not only beyond his means but so scarce that only the *apparatchiki* could get them in any case, and since he had no friends to speak of, he was never invited for dinner or cards. In all



the years he had known Rodion Ivanovich, the closest they had come to intimacy was an occasional exchange on sports or office politics over a lunchtime game of chess. Now Rodion was inviting him to his house. It was novel, comradely. The idea of it—of dinner out, conversation, the company of women other than the dreary Romanov wife and daughter or the vituperative Mrs. Yeroshkin—suddenly burst into flower in his head and flooded his body with warmth and anticipation. “Yes,” he said finally, “yes, I’d like that very much.”

AFTER WORK, AKAKY SPENT TWO HOURS IN LINE AT the grocery, waiting to buy a small box of chocolates for his hostess. He had only a few rubles left till payday, but remembered reading somewhere that the thoughtful dinner guest always brought a little gift for the hostess—chocolates, flowers, a bottle of wine. Since he wasn’t a drinker, he decided against the wine, and since flowers were virtually impossible to obtain in Moscow at this time of year, he settled on candy—a nice little box of chocolates with cream centers would be just the thing. Unfortunately, by the time he got to the head of the line every last chocolate in the store had been bought up, and he was left with a choice between penny bubble gum and a rock-hard concoction of peppermint and butterscotch coated in a vaguely sweet soya substance that sold for two to the penny. He took ten of each.

As he hurried up Chernyshevsky Street, clutching the scrap of paper on which Mishkin had scrawled his address, Akaky was surprised by a sudden snow squall. He had thought it was too cold for snow, but there it was, driving at him like a fusillade of frozen needles. Cocking the hat down over his brow and thrusting his hands deep in his pockets, he couldn’t help smiling—the overcoat was marvelous, repelling the white crystals like a shield, and he was as warm as if he were home in bed. He was thinking of how miserable he would have been in the old overcoat, shivering and stamping, dashing in and out of doorways like a madman, his bones rattling and nose running—when suddenly he felt an arm slip through his. Instinctively, he jerked back and found himself staring into the perfect oval of a young woman’s face—she had hold of his arm and she was matching him stride for stride as if they were old acquaintances out for an evening stroll. “Cold night,” she breathed, looking up into his eyes.

Akaky didn’t know what to do. He stared into her face with fascination and horror—what was happening to him?—captivated by her candid eyes and mascaraed lashes, the blonde curls fringing her fur cap, the soft wet invitation of her Western lipstick. “I—I beg your pardon?” he said, trying to draw his hand from his pocket.

She had a firm grip on him. “You’re so handsome,” she said. “Do you work at the Ministry? I love your coat. It’s so, so elegant.”

“I’m sorry,” he said, “I’ve—”

“Would you like to take me out?” she said. “I’m available tonight. We could have a drink and then later—” She narrowed her eyes and squeezed his hand, still buried in the overcoat pocket.

“No, no,” he said, his voice strained and unfamiliar in his ears, as if he had suddenly been thrust into a stranger’s body, “no, you see I can’t, really, I—I’m on my way to a dinner engagement.”

They were stopped now, standing as close as lovers. She looked up at him imploringly, then said something about money. The snow blew in their faces, their breath mingled in clouds. Suddenly Akaky was running, hurtling headlong up the street as if a legion of gypsy violinists and greedy Yankee moneylenders were nipping at his heels, his heart drumming beneath the standard brown-serge suit, the layers of down, and the soft, impenetrable elegance of his camel’s hair overcoat.

“AKAKY AKAKIEVICH, HOW GOOD TO SEE YOU.” Rodion stood at the door, blowing on his fingertips. Beside him, a short, broad-faced woman in an embroidered dressing gown, whom Akaky took to be his wife. “Masha,” Rodion said by way of confirmation, and Akaky made a quick little bow and produced the bag of sweets. To his consternation, he saw that in the confusion on the street it had gotten a bit crushed, and that some of the soya substance had begun to stain the bottom of the white confectioner’s bag. Masha’s smile bloomed and faded as quickly as an accelerated film clip of horticultural miracles. “You shouldn’t have,” she said.

The apartment was magnificent, stunning, like nothing Akaky could have imagined. Three and a half rooms, abundantly furnished, with oil paintings on the walls—and they had it all to themselves. Rodion showed him around the place. There was a new stove and refrigerator, a love seat in the front room. Little Ludmila lay sleeping on a cot in the bedroom. “Really, Rodion Ivanovich, I’m impressed,” Akaky said, wondering how his friend managed to live so well. It was true that Rodion, as Deputy Assistant to the Chief File Clerk of the Thirty-Second Bureau, made somewhat more than he did, and true too that Akaky was effectively operating on half pay because of his mother, but still, this was real opulence as far as he was concerned. Rodion was showing him the Swiss cuckoo clock. “It’s very kind of you to say that, Akaky. Yes,” puffing at his fingers, “we find it comfortable.”

There were a number of courses at dinner: a clear broth; fish in cream sauce; pickled sausages, white bread, and cheese; chicken, *galushki*, and Brussels sprouts. Rodion poured vodka and French wine throughout the meal, and afterward served a cherry cake and coffee. Akaky recognized some of the other guests from the office—faces but not names—and found himself engaged in a conversation with the man beside him over the melodic virtues of Dixieland jazz as opposed to the dissonance of

free jazz. Akaky had never heard of either variety of jazz—in fact, he only vaguely knew what jazz was: a degenerate, Negro sort of thing from America, with blaring horns and saxophones—but he smiled agreeably and asked an occasional question, while the man expatiated on one school of musical thought or another. Timidly, Akaky began to sip at the glass of wine before him; each time he turned around the glass was full again, and Rodion was beaming at him from the head of the table. He began to feel a depth of warmth and gratitude toward these people gathered around him, his comrades, men and women whose interests and knowledge ranged so far, whose wit flowed so easily; at one point he realized how much he had been missing, felt that until now life had been passing him by. When Rodion proposed a toast to Masha—it was her birthday—Akaky was the first to raise his glass.

After the coffee, there was more vodka, a few hands of cards, and a good uproarious sing-along, all the old tunes Akaky had sung as a boy rising up from some deep hollow in him to burst forth as if he rehearsed them every day. He never missed a beat. When finally he thought to look at his watch, he was shocked to see that it was past one in the morning. Rodion's eyes were bloodshot, and the patch of skin on his cheek seemed to have concentrated all the color in his face; Masha was nowhere to be seen, and only one other guest remained—the jazz man—snoring peacefully in the corner. Akaky leaped to his feet, thanked Rodion profusely—"Best time I've had in years, in *years*, Rodion Ivanovich"—and hurried out into the desolate streets.

It was still snowing. Silently, stealthily, while Akaky had been pulling strips of chicken from the bone, raising his glass, and singing "How high the shrubless crags!" the snow had been steadily accumulating, until now it spread a flat, even finish over streets, stairways, and rooftops, and clung like dander to the hoods of automobiles and the skeletons of neglected bicycles. Whistling, Akaky kicked through the ankle-deep powder, for once unmindful of his cracked imitation-plastic galoshes and disintegrating gloves, the fox collar as warm as a hand against the back of his neck. As he turned into Red Square, he was thinking how lucky he was.

It was ghostly, the Square, as barren as the surface of the moon, trackless and white. Behind him, Pokrovsky Cathedral, like some shrouded Turkish dream; ahead, the dark bank of the Lenin Mausoleum and the soft, snow-blurred lights of the city. He was just passing the Mausoleum when two men materialized before him. The one was tall, cheekbones like slashes, with a fierce Oriental moustache that disappeared in the folds of his muffler; the other was hooded and slight. "Comrade," snarled the taller man, rushing at him out of the gloom, "that's my coat you've got there."

"No," Akaky said, "no, you must be mistaken," but the man had already taken hold of his collar and presented him with a bare fist the size of a football. The fist wavered

under Akaky's nose for an instant, then dropped into the darkness and hammered him three or four times in the midsection. Suddenly Akaky was on the ground, crying out like an abandoned infant, while the big man rolled him over and his accomplice tugged at the sleeve of the overcoat. Ten seconds later it was over. Akaky lay on the ground in his standard brown-serge suit and imitation-plastic galoshes, doubled up in the fetal position, gasping for breath. The thugs were gone. In the near distance, the Kremlin wall drew a white line across the night. The snow sifted down with a hiss.



HOW HE MADE IT HOME THAT NIGHT, AKAKY WOULD never know. For a long while he merely lay there in the snow, stunned by the enormity of the crime against him, some last fiber of his faith and conviction frayed to the breaking point. He remembered the feel of the snowflakes brushing his lips and melting against his eyelids, remembered feeling warm and cozy despite it, remembered the overwhelming, seductive craving for oblivion, for sleep and surcease. As he lay there, drifting between consciousness and absence, the words of the First Secretary began to echo in his ears, over and over, a record stuck in the groove: "Our goal is to make the life of the Soviet people still better, still more beautiful, and still more happy." Oh, yes, oh, yes, he thought, lying there on the ground. And then the man and woman had come along—or was it two men and a woman?—practically tripping over him in the dark. "My God," the woman had gasped, "it's a poor murdered man!"

They helped him to his feet, brushed the snow from his clothes. He was mad with the cold, and the hunger for justice—who said the world was fair or that everyone played by the same rules?—delirious with the fever of purpose. "The police!" he sputtered as a gloved hand held a flask of vodka to his lips. "I've been robbed." They were solicitous, these people, faces and voices emerging dreamlike from the banks of swirling snow, but they were cautious, too—distant, even. (It was as though they weren't quite sure what to make of his story. Was he the victimized citizen he claimed to be, or merely a gibbering kopeck-wheeler on the tail end of a drinking spree?) They guided him to the nearest precinct station and left him on the steps.

Pockets and cuffs heavy with snow, his eyebrows frosted over and lower lip quivering with indignation, Akaky burst through the massive double doors and into the cavernous anteroom of the Bolshaya Ordynka police station. It was 3:00 A.M. Four patrolmen stood in the corner be-

neath the Soviet flag, drinking tea and joking in low tones; another pair sat together in the front row of an interminable file of benches, playing backgammon. At the far end of the chamber, on a dais, a jowly officer with thick-lidded eyes sat behind a desk the size of a pickup truck.

Akaky trotted the length of the room, a self-generated wind flapping round him, bits of compacted snow flying from his suit. "I've been beaten and robbed!" he cried, his voice strangely constricted, as if someone had hold of his windpipe. "In a public place. In Red Square. They took, they took"—here he felt himself racked by deep, quaking bursts of sorrow, so that he had to fight back the tears—"they took my overcoat!"

The desk sergeant looked down at him, immense, inscrutable, his head as heavy and shaggy as a circus bear's. Behind him, a great faded mural depicted Lenin at the helm of the ship of state. After a long moment of absolute, drenching silence, the sergeant pressed a chubby hand to his eyes, then rattled some papers and waited for the clerk to appear at his side. The clerk, also in uniform, looked to be about eighteen or nineteen, his face cratered with acne. "You will fill out this form, comrade, delineating the salient details," the clerk said, handing Akaky eight or ten pages of printed matter and an imitation-ballpoint pen, "and then you will return at ten o'clock sharp tomorrow morning."

Akaky sat over the form—Place of Employment, Birthdate, Mother's Name and Shoe Size, Residence Permit Number, Previous Arrest Record—until past four in the morning. Then he handed it to the clerk, absently gathered up his hat and gloves, and wandered out into the teeth of the storm, as dazed and unsteady as the sole survivor of a shipwreck.



AKAKY WOKE WITH A START AT QUARTER PAST NINE the following morning, the Ukrainian-made alarm clock having failed to go off on schedule. He was late for work, late for his appointment at the police station, his throat ached, a phlegmy cough clenched at his chest, and, worst of all, his overcoat was gone—gone, vanished, pilfered, three months' salary down the drain. It hit him all at once, in the instant of waking, and he fell back against the pillow, paralyzed, crushed under the weight of catastrophe and loss of faith. "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin!" he cried, taking the great man's name in vain as the six smirking Yeroshkin brats trundled by his bed on their way to school, "what am I going to do now?"

If he could have buried himself then and there, piled

the dirt eight feet high atop his bed, he would have done it. What was the sense in going on? But then he thought of the police—perhaps they had apprehended the thieves, put them behind bars where they belonged, perhaps they had recovered his overcoat. He pictured the bearlike sergeant handing it to him with his apologies, and then commending him for his alert description of the crime's perpetrators and the swift and unhesitating way in which he had filled out the crime report. As he pulled on the standard brown-serge trousers and imitation-plastic boots, the image of the coat filled his consciousness and for a minute he was lost in reverie, remembering its softness, its lines, its snug and simple elegance. How long had he owned it—less than twenty-four hours? He wanted to cry.

His hand trembled as he knotted the olive-drab tie, finger-combed his hair, and tried to reach the office on Irina Yeroshkin's telephone. "Hello? Kropotkin's Laundry. May I be of assistance?" He hung up, dialed again. A voice immediately came over the wire, no salutation or identification, reading a list of numbers in a harsh, consonant-thick accent: "*Dva-devyat-odin-chetirye-dva-dva*—" Akaky's stomach was on fire, his head pumped full of helium. He slammed down the receiver, snatched up the sad, ragged tatters of his Soviet-made overcoat, and hurried out the door.

It was three minutes past ten when he hurtled through the doors of the police station like a madman, out of breath, racked with shivers, and trailing a dirty fringe of knotted felt lining. He ran headlong into a hunched old grandmother in a babushka—what was it about her that looked so familiar?—and realized with a start that the room that had been so empty just six hours ago was now thronged with people. The old woman, who called him a rude name and set down a bag of beetroot to give him a clean, two-armed shove, was standing in an endless snaking line that cut back on itself and circled the room twice. Akaky followed the line to the end and asked a man in knee boots and Tatar hat what was going on. The man looked up from the chess puzzle he had been studying and fixed Akaky with a cold eye. "I assume you have a crime to report, comrade?"

Akaky bit his lower lip. "They took my overcoat."

The man held up a closely inscribed form. "Have you picked up your report yet?"

"Well, no, I—"

"First door to your left," the man said, turning back to his puzzle. Akaky looked in the direction the man had indicated and saw that a line nearly as long as the first was backed up outside the door. His stomach turned over like an egg in a skillet. This was going to be a wait.

At four-thirty, just when Akaky had begun to despair of gaining admission to the inner sanctum of the police headquarters or of ever seeing his overcoat again, a man in the uniform of the OBKhSS marched down the line to where Akaky was standing, snapped his heels together, and said: "Akaky A. Bashmachkin?" The OBKhSS was a branch of

the Ministry of Internal Security, officially designated "The Department for the Struggle Against the Plundering of Socialist Property." Its job, as Akaky was reminded each day in the newspapers and on TV, was to curtail black-market activities by cracking down on the pirating of the people's goods to pay for foreign luxury items smuggled into the country. "Yes," Akaky blinked. "I—I've lost an overcoat."

"Come with me, please." The man spun on one heel and stamped off in the direction from which he had come,



STILL LIFE, BUT ONE

My great grandfather had eight tall brothers and when the oldest one died in the hayloft, it occurred to one of my great uncles that no one had a photograph of all nine. They propped him against the flowered wall in the parlor, stiff and dead as a doornail.

The daguerreotypist came, and, in its way, the daguerreotype is credible: the lines, though nineteenth-century, are still sharp, and, clearly, two brothers cradle the elbows of the dead man in the pocket of their palms. The other six are grouped three to a side

(*Symmetria in Vita, in Morte*, our crest), sixteen eyes open, two closed, mine staring in disbelief at the unthwarted vigor of each brother's beard, at *his* ghost-white beard and darkened nails, both of which had grown since his wife came and groomed him for the grave,

and, recently, I've spent the moon wondering about the man: why his face, wrenched tight at the end, never relaxed, how his long form leaned against the living seems a shadow bar thrown against the light, how his stiffness helps hold him. I imagine a suspicion

grew in their ranks that they had not stood death up, and that someday only one would be left here to hold this plate and look at eight men unnerved by the flash in the powder pan, but taken, one by one, with the notion of a lens that shutters once and captures all it sees.

—Sidney Burris

Akaky hurrying to keep up. They breezed by the sixty or so scowling citizens who comprised the forward section of the line, passed through the heavy wooden door into a room swarming with victims, suspects, police officers, and clerks, and then through a second door, down a hallway, and finally into a long, low-ceilinged room dominated by a glossy conference table. A single man sat at the head of the table. He was bald-headed, clean-shaven, dressed in slippers, slacks, and sports shirt. "Have a seat," he said, indicating a chair at the near end of the table. And then, to the OBKhSS man: "Watch the door, will you, Zamyotov?"

"Now," he said, clearing his throat and consulting the form on the table before him, "you're Akaky A. Bashmachkin, is that right?" His voice was warm, fraternal, spilling over the room like sugared tea. He could have been a country physician, a writer of children's books, the genial veterinarian who had tended the old cow Akaky's grandmother had kept tethered outside the door when he was a boy in the Urals. "I'm Inspector Zharyenoye, Security Police," he said.

Akaky nodded impatiently. "They've taken my overcoat, sir."

"Yes," said Zharyenoye, leaning forward, "why don't you tell me about it."

Akaky told him. In detail. Told him of the mockery he had been exposed to at the office, of Petrovich's promise, of the overcoat itself, and of the brutal, un-Communist spirit of the men who had taken it from him. His eyes were wet when he was finished.

Zharyenoye had listened patiently throughout Akaky's recitation, interrupting him only twice—to ask Petrovich's address and to question what Akaky was doing in Red Square at one-thirty in the morning. When Akaky was finished, Zharyenoye snapped his fingers and the anti-plunderer from the OBKhSS stepped into the room and laid a package on the table. The inspector waved his hand, and the man tore back the wrapping paper.

Akaky nearly leaped out of his chair: there, stretched out on the table before him, as pristine and luxurious as when he had first laid eyes on it, was his overcoat. He was overjoyed, jubilant, he was delirious with gratitude and relief. Suddenly he was on his feet, pumping the OBKhSS man's hand. "I can hardly believe it," he exclaimed. "You've found it, you've found my overcoat!"

"One moment, Comrade Bashmachkin," the inspector said. "I wonder if you might positively identify the coat as the one you were deprived of early this morning. Has your name been sewed into the lining, perhaps? Can you tell me what the pockets contain?"

Akaky wanted to kiss the inspector's bald pate, dance him round the room; how good the policemen were, how efficient and dedicated and clever. "Yes, yes, of course. Um, in the right front pocket there's an article clipped from the paper on cheese production in Chelyabinsk—my grandmother used to make her own."

Zharyenoye went through the pockets, extracting seven kopecks, a pocket comb, and a neatly folded page of newsprint. He read the headline: "‘Cheese Production Up.’ Well, I guess that proves ownership incontrovertibly, wouldn’t you say, Mr. Zamyotov?—unless Comrade Bashmachkin is a clairvoyant." The inspector gave a little laugh; Zamyotov, humorless as a watchdog, grunted his concurrence.

Akaky was grinning. Grinning like a cosmonaut on parade, like a schoolboy accepting the Karl Marx Solidarity Prize before the assembled faculty and student body. He stepped forward to thank the inspector and collect his overcoat, but Zharyenoye, suddenly stern-faced, waved him off. He had a penknife in his hand, and he was bending over the coat. Akaky looked on, bewildered, as the inspector carefully severed a number of the stitches fastening the lining to the inner collar of the coat. With an impeccably manicured thumbnail, Zharyenoye prized a label from beneath the lining. Akaky stared down at it. Black thread, white acetate: MADE IN HONG KONG.

The animation had gone out of the inspector’s voice. "Perhaps you’d better sit down, comrade," he said.

FROM THAT MOMENT ON, AKAKY’S LIFE SHIFTED gears, lurching into a rapid and inexorable downward spiral. The inspector had finally let him go—but only after a three-hour grilling, a lecture on civic duty, and the imposition of a one-hundred-ruble fine for receiving smuggled goods. The overcoat, of course, became the property of the Soviet government. Akaky left the conference room in a daze—he felt as if he had been squeezed like a blister, flattened like a fly. His coat was gone, yes—that was bad enough. But everything he believed in, everything he had worked for, everything he had been taught from the day he took his first faltering steps and gurgled over a communal rattle—that was gone too. He wandered the streets for hours, in despair, a stiff, relentless wind poking fingers of ice through the rotten fabric of his Soviet-made overcoat.

The cold he had picked up in Red Square worsened. Virulent, opportunistic, the microbes began to work in concert, and the cold became the flu, bronchitis, pneumonia. Akaky lay in his bed, ravaged with fever, unable to breathe—he felt as if someone had stuffed a sock down his throat and stretched him out on the stove to simmer. Mrs. Romanov tried to feed him some borscht; Irina Yeroshkin berated him for letting himself go. Her husband called a doctor, a young woman who had been trained in Yakutsk and seemed to have a great deal of trouble inserting the

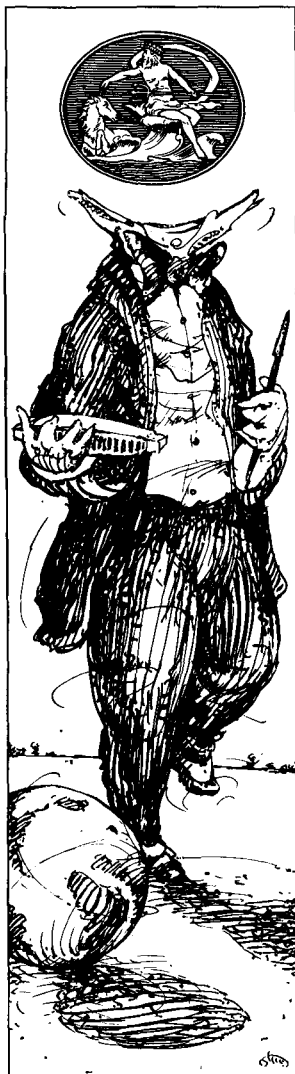
thermometer and getting a temperature reading. She prescribed rest and a strong emetic.

At one point in his delirium Akaky imagined that three or four of the Yeroshkin children were having a game of darts over his bed; another time he was certain that the blond tough from the office was laughing at him, urging him to pull on his cracked, imitation-plastic galoshes and come back to work like a man. Old Studniuk was with him when the end came. The patriarch was leaning over him, his head blazing like the summer sun, his voice tense and querulous; he was lecturing: "Oh, you ass, you young ass—didn’t I tell you so? The blindness, the blindness." The old gums smacked like thunder, the whole world shrieked in Akaky’s ears. "I suppose you think they built that wall in Berlin to keep people out, eh? Eh?" Studniuk demanded, and suddenly Akaky was crying out, his voice choked with terror and disbelief—he must have been reliving the scene in Red Square, his feet pounding the pavement, fingers clutching at the Kremlin wall, the thieves at his heels—"Faster!" he shouted, "faster! Someone get me a ladder!" And then he was quiet.

There were no ghosts haunting Moscow that winter, no vengeful, overcoat-snatching wraiths driven from uneasy graves to settle the score among the living. Nor was there any slowdown in the influx of foreign-made overcoats pouring across the Finnish border, channeled through the maze of docks at Odessa, packed like herring in the trunks of diplomats’ wives and the baggage of Party officials returning from abroad. No, life went on as usual. Zhigulis hummed along the streets, clerks clerked and writers wrote, old Studniuk unearthed an antediluvian crony to take over Akaky’s room, and Irina Yeroshkin found herself pregnant again. Rodion Mishkin thought of Akaky from time to time, shaking his head over a tongue sandwich or pausing for a moment over his lunchtime chess match with Grigory Stavrogin, the spunky blond lad they had moved up to Akaky’s desk, and Inspector Zharyenoye had a single nightmare in which he imagined the little clerk storming naked into the room and repossessing his overcoat. But that was about it. Rodion soon forgot his former colleague—Grigory’s gambits were so much more challenging—and Zharyenoye opened his closet the morning after his odd little dream to find the overcoat where he had left it—hanging undisturbed between a pair of sports shirts and his dress uniform. The inspector never had another thought of Akaky Akakievich as long as he lived, and when he wore the overcoat in the street, proud and triumphant, people invariably mistook him for the First Secretary himself. □

THE HARMONICA IN AMERICA

BY FRED NADIS



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK STEELE

Harmonica Used During War Between the States. A wounded Confederate soldier staggers from the smoke and screams of the battlefield to the cathedral-lit sanctuary of the forest. From his breast pocket, just above a bullet wound, he extracts a harmonica and begins to play . . . as he lies dying, dreaming of home.

Origin. The first patents for an invention now called the mouth organ, or, more commonly, the harmonica, were granted in Germany in 1822. The instrument itself began to appear on the street corners of European towns in the early part of the nineteenth century, along with two other newly developed instruments in the same family, the accordion and the concertina. Soon afterward, in these same European towns, angry mobs burned thousands of harmonicas and accordions in public squares.

Harmonica-makers began to export their product.

Western Use. A party of gold prospectors in the Klondike traverse a mountain, wading waist-deep in snow. They are loaded with sacks, picks, and various supplies, including harmonicas. Tempers flare, a dispute breaks out. While fool-hardy members of the group begin to hack at each other with shovels, a more philosophic prospector chips the ice away from his harmonica, thaws it over a small fire, and plays a dirge.

Mass Production. The chief producers of harmonicas are the Soviet Union, Poland, France, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia, and Trenton, New Jersey. Production in the United States from 1910 through 1920 averaged 5.6 million tons. Production in 1921 tapered to 2.3 million tons.

Images of the Harmonica in American Films. Motion-picture portrayals encourage patriotic regard for the instrument. In the final scene of one Hollywood movie, for example, a band of grizzled soldiers are driving along in a wagon. John Wayne saunters ahead on a horse. One of the mud-spattered soldiers on the wagon, whom the others

call "the Kid," takes out a harmonica and, as they drive slowly along, plays an up-tempo version of "Oh, Susannah." Throughout the film, the Kid has played "Oh, Susannah" on his harmonica when the action lulls. When he starts playing this time, John Wayne shakes his head and we see the hint of a smile on his weary face. As if voicing his thoughts, someone on the wagon says, "You know, I think he's getting better."

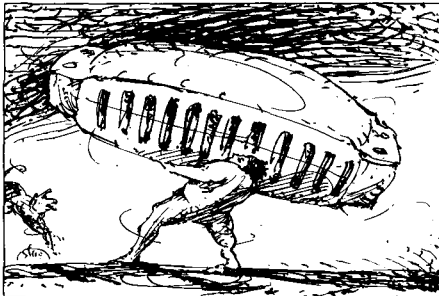
Worldwide Favorite. A small harmonica built by the Hohner company in Germany, called the "Marine Band," is generally considered the standard harmonica. Although purchasers often use the harmonica, the design of the box stimulates a high percentage of sales. The color of the Marine Band box, which in shape resembles a small casket, is a stale yellow-white with the edges outlined in blue. On the left half of the lid is an oval, black-and-white photograph of the U.S. Marine Band. The members of the U.S. Marine Band, uniformed and blurry-faced, stand in rows on the stone steps of an official building. In front of them, wearing a slightly more ornate uniform, stands the bandmaster. If they were bowling pins, he would be the one to aim for. Much detail, for example the identity of the instruments the musicians hold, is lost owing to the poor resolution of the photograph, which dates to about 1910. Whether this is the actual U.S. Marine Band, as the label indicates, or a dummy group photographed near Hohner's factory in Germany has long been a topic of argument among specialists. Next to the photograph in bright-red circus lettering appears the product name: Marine Band, made by M. Hohner, Germany.

The American Craze. In the early 1900s, harmonica popularity was at its highest. All-harmonica revues toured the music halls of major cities—according to Washington gossip, the fad even reached the highest office in the land. The story goes that on many warm sum-

Fred Nadis, a native of Chicago, now lives on City Island, New York.

mer evenings Woodrow Wilson would invite his Cabinet and friends over to the White House for brandy and conversation. Under a bright summer moon, they would gather out on the White House terrace, and before long the President would instruct a servant to bring him his harmonica. Wilson would then entertain his company; he would play "Way Down Upon the Swanee River," "The Star-Spangled Banner," and other popular melodies of the day; in between numbers he would comment on what a shame it was to use military force in Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, when really the most important thing, as Lucretius had once mentioned, was to have fun with friends.

Decline, Disgrace. It is generally acknowledged that World War I had a detrimental effect on harmonica use. Trapped in the trenches by rocket barrages, soldiers who chose to play a few bars on the harmonica were subject to poison-gas attacks. Most of America's



eminent harmonica players—decent fellows, who preferred to follow the promptings of the Heart rather than Reason—were killed in this manner, and thus began the harmonica's decline.

The story of the harmonica in post-war years is equally grim. Few practitioners of the art were left. Memories of its glory proved to be short-lived. By the late twenties, along with alcohol and marching bands, the instrument had entirely faded from the popular consciousness.

This completes the story of the harmonica in America to date. It should be noted that in this period of decline another instrument, which bears an uncanny resemblance to the harmonica, is beginning to spread into wider usage in this country. However, much of the information now available on this instrument, the "blues harp," is of doubtful accuracy. Few experts consider investigations of blues-harp trends to be of overwhelming importance. □

WRITERS

JOINING THE WORKING CLASS

At the Writers Congress, militancy and a call for a union

BY JAMES ATLAS



"CAN I HAVE YOUR attention, please?" a bearded young man in a baseball cap was yelling. "The *Nation* T-shirts: does anyone know where they are?" On the mezzanine of New York's Roosevelt Hotel, a surly mob of late arrivals swirled about in confusion; too many people had shown up, and registration was closed. In a klieg-lit conference room down the hall, Piri Thomas, the author of *Down These Mean Streets*, was intoning the joys of selfhood like a Pentecostal preacher: "I've learned that as a poet I'm beautiful, that my wife, Betty, and my beautiful children, they're beautiful, man!" The American Writers Congress had begun.

From the start, it had promised to be a curious event. Dreamed up by Victor Navasky, the editor of *The Nation*, the congress had been a year in preparation; writers all over the country had been enlisted to serve on the inviting committee (which meant having one's name included on the ever-lengthening list that ran down the lefthand margin of the congress letterhead; few of us really got to invite anyone). For three days in October, announced the brochure, "panels, workshops, roundtables, caucuses and plenary sessions" would address themselves to the predicament of the writer in American society—and those too jaded to be lured in by such a solemn occasion could look forward to "New York's largest literary cocktail party."

Still, this was more than just an opportunity to hoist a few with Kurt Vonnegut and Donald Barthelme. The congress logo was a clenched fist clutching a rapier-like pencil, and the invitation bristled with urgency. "Writers in America face a crisis," the authors declared. The increasing power of conglomerates; reduced government support for the arts; censorship by special-interest groups: these were the issues submitted for debate. "A congress is a forum for political action," Navasky

stressed, and an "implementation committee" had been formed to act upon the results of the plenary session. There were even supposed to have been grievance hearings (I thought of Portnoy's cry: "Whew! Have I got grievances!"), but these were mysteriously canceled at the last minute. Clearly, the American Writers Congress meant business.

Apart from the disappearance of the *Nation* T-shirts and the inevitable chaos surrounding an assemblage of 3,000 writers, the event had been well-organized. There was a good deal of advance publicity, a special issue of *The Nation* devoted to the issues the congress hoped to address, and a program thick with scheduled workshops. Some were dauntingly high-minded: "Eros, Language, and Pornography," "Ideology, Truth, and Self-Censorship," "The Politics of Literacy." Others appealed to particular constituencies: "How Can Gay and Lesbian Writers Get Taken Seriously?" "The Chicago Tradition of Proletarian Writing," "An Evening of Solidarity With Silenced Korean Writers." And the panelists had come prepared; instead of simply talking around a subject, they read their introductory remarks, then responded to questions from the floor.

This orderly procedure didn't prevent a certain amount of mayhem. "If there are not one or two walkouts, the normal number of fistfights, and an attempt at disruption, this congress will be a disappointment," Navasky declared in his opening remarks; and while I didn't see anyone land a blow, there were more than enough flurries of literary truculence to satisfy his criteria. At the panel on "Working-Class Writing," Avery Corman, the author of *Kramer vs. Kramer*, was denounced as "a rich Jew," and one hirsute interlocutor was told he needed "a haircut and a shave." "I have seen some drama critics skulking around," Joseph Papp commented, speaking before a large audience in the main ballroom, "so I gather we have a very broad definition of 'writer.'" And when I pointed out to John Simon, who

James Atlas is an associate editor of The Atlantic.

had shown up for a panel on "The Tastemakers: Critics as Cultural Czars," that he would be sharing the dais with all his enemies, he glanced at the four other participants and said, "Surely I have more enemies than that."

By these standards, the panel on "The Book Wars: Local Censorship of Language and Ideas" was a mild affair. The moderator was Frances FitzGerald, and the panelists included Vonnegut and the educator Herbert Kohl, but it was clearly a representative from the Moral Majority named Michael Farris and the Rev. H. Lamarr Mooneyham who fascinated the audience; few of them had ever seen such people. ("You can tell which ones the Christians are," a friend of mine remarked before we had even consulted our programs.) Deferential and articulate, the Moral Majoritarian was unnervingly reasonable in defending the right of creationists to protect their children from atheistic ideas; the liberal audience was intolerant and rude—and self-righteous. When the hearing was thrown open to questions from the floor, a crowd that reminded me of Orwell's description of the "earnest ladies in sandals" who used to plague socialist meetings in London stormed the microphone and launched into their autobiographies ("I myself have been a teacher for over forty years"; "I too have written on the subject"), ignoring the moderator's determined efforts to find out what the "question" was. By the end, when a volatile young man in jeans and a lumber jacket stood up and demanded that the U.S. get out of El Salvador, even the man from the Moral Majority looked flustered.

There were so many panels happening at once, and those scheduled in the cramped conference rooms were so crowded, that one often found oneself attending one's third or fourth choice. But this was no tragedy; I learned a great deal from Thomas Scott, a Chicago newspaper-and-magazine distributor, who described in a panel on censorship how Cuban journals are routinely confiscated by U.S. customs authorities. And I heard the spirited testimony of Lawson Inada, a Japanese-American poet who spent his childhood in one of the notorious internment camps that were established in the United States during World War II. Engagingly modest (the rarest of traits in a writer), he confided that "being up here on the pod-

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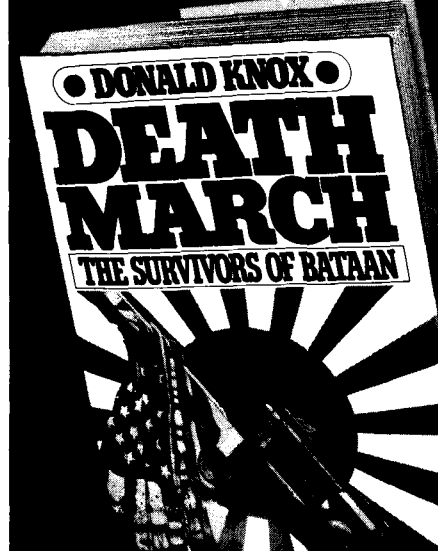
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ium makes me feel like I'm somebody," and he shared with an appreciative audience some advice from his grandfather, a fishmonger in Fresno: "Be honest, make deliveries, give credit, and always be fresh."

The famous were in evidence, surrounded by clots of admirers (the really famous—Bellow, Mailer, Updike, Roth—didn't attend; perhaps they hadn't heard about the crisis); but it was the younger poets and novelists just beginning to acquire reputations, the working journalists, and—you'll forgive the expression—the Third World writers who dominated the proceedings. Nicolás Kanellos, a professor at the University of Houston, deplored the lack of attention paid "Latino" literature by "the commercial writing establishment," and rebuked the American Writers Congress itself: "The old liberal establishment is dead and its left wing is a footnote to history," he insisted. "We cannot allow you to represent us." In a panel on "The Varieties of 'American' Literature," the black novelist Ishmael Reed echoed Kanellos's contention that the congress wasn't representative, claiming that *his* people were more American than the "new settler critics and academicians" who wrote for "colonial publications." Others deplored the power of the eastern cultural establishment. "New York isn't the center of the literary world," the Chicano writer Rudolfo Anaya asserted. ("Then why isn't this congress being held in Tucson?" whispered a critic in the row behind me.)

INDEED, THE MOOD was militant from the start. The whole weekend was out of another time, a time when writers found themselves embroiled in the nation's political life. At the writers congresses of the thirties, it was capitalism itself that came under attack; the Communist Party, which organized those turbulent displays of solidarity, made sure its rigorously selected delegates concentrated on the prospects for socialist revolution. It wasn't enough to be liberal; the issue debated by Malcolm Cowley, James T. Farrell, John Dos Passos, and other participants in the early congresses was how closely writers had to adhere to the Party line.

The American Writers Congress was more informal and less doctrinaire but just as insistently left-wing. At the Friday-evening convocation, Toni Morrison

addressed the crowd with stylish vehemence, calling for "a heroic writer's movement" and declaring that "we are already at the barricades." Meridel Le Sueur, a midwestern writer born in 1900 who seems to have participated in every significant political demonstration of the century, reminisced in a sturdy, defiant voice about hearing John Reed speak at Madison Square Garden and about the march held on the night Sacco and Vanzetti were executed. "Writers must organize and defend themselves like farmers and workers," she concluded. Not a very likely prospect, I thought, noting the crowd lined up to pay \$2.75 apiece for tickets worth one drink, redeemable at the bar.

The old familiar themes came up again



and again: the malevolent activities of the CIA; the ominous power of corporations; the government's oppression of the poor (in this case, writers rather than minorities). And the panels—"Feminist Literature," "The Media and United States Foreign Policy," "Whatever Happened to the Labor Press?"—were avowedly radical, despite efforts to achieve what Navasky described as "an instructive diversity of opinion." Whatever its original intent, the congress soon became a spontaneous welling up of resistance to the reactionary forces perceived to dominate the country, the first real opportunity in a decade for those on the left to protest out loud.

But what, some uneasily wondered, did any of this have to do with writers? The two great mysteries, Donald Barthelme suggested, flinching in the

spotlights of a documentary crew and clearly unnerved by all the fist-clenching rhetoric, were "Why are we here and what is to be done?" Many were there because everyone else was there; herds of writers roamed the worn-carpeted corridors and lobbies of the dowdy hotel day and night, peering at each other's name tags and gossiping with old friends. ("Hey, weren't you in my high school creative-writing class?" said a thirtyish man in a tweed jacket to a woman at the bar.) Others were there to cover the congress, jotting down their colleagues' *mots* and attributing them to "a delegate."

There was, however, one constituency that arrived with an agenda, and that was the Organizing Committee for a National Writers Union—a group of writers that had been meeting for several months on its own. At first, the committee was hesitant even to put before the congress a resolution endorsing the principle of such a union; "After all, we didn't want a negative vote right at the beginning," said Laurie Stone, one of the union committee's organizers. But the panel "Why a Union?" was so jammed that another room had to be found, and a few hours later, when Alexander Cockburn, a columnist for *The Village Voice*, ended a crowded afternoon panel on conglomerates in the publishing industry by calling for a straw vote on the issue, the response was overwhelmingly favorable.

The union committee may have been timid about introducing a resolution, but it was certainly well-prepared. Professional organizers gave advice, labor lawyers testified; a writer from Hollywood explained how the Writers Guild of America (composed of screenwriters and dramatists) had forced producers to share the profits derived from cable television. Eva Figes, a representative of the Writers Guild of Great Britain, described some of the victories gained over there, among them, the Public Lending Right, which guarantees royalties to writers whenever their books are borrowed from a library. Signatures were collected, caucuses organized, future meetings scheduled. By the plenary session, the union had become the main subject of debate.

It wasn't as if the idea hadn't occurred to anyone before. The League of American Writers, created at the first Writers Congress, in 1935, was urged at a second congress two years later to form a

trade union of its own, but nothing ever came of it. And, as recently as the seventies, a number of local unions, such as the Media Alliance in San Francisco and the Washington Independent Writers, were formed to protect free-lancers. The Writers Guild and the Newspaper Guild have been around since the thirties.

But no effort to create a national union has ever managed to resolve certain crucial issues, among them: Is it legal? "Writers," unlike screenwriters and journalists, own their work, and if publishers were to bring suit against them a court could rule a union in restraint of trade. Then there is the matter of who would belong to such a union. How would it be determined if a writer was qualified? ("After all, some of us aren't that good," admitted one of the more candid free-lancers.) How could a union represent such a diversity of members, from columnists for technical journals to experimental novelists? And what strike power could such a diffuse group really have? "We are bourgeois individualists," Susan Brownmiller said. "Can you expect an author who has worked for five years on a manuscript to withhold delivery of it to a publisher?" Besides, what novelist in his atelier, however proletarian his wardrobe, ever considered himself a member of the rank and file? Writers in America have no trade-union consciousness, argued a radical feminist I talked to. "They're all waiting to make it big."

Still, the more one considered the issues raised at the congress—the trend toward conglomerates in the publishing industry, the dominance of bookstore chains that promote what the novelist Mary Lee Settle has called "the censorship of slow-moving books"—the more attractive the idea of a union seemed. And even if it couldn't intervene in the process of production and distribution, it could at least negotiate to change some of the worst abuses in the standard book contract: the author's exclusive liability in any legal suit; the publisher's right to refuse a contracted work on the grounds that it is "unacceptable," without stipulating why; and other inequities that have seldom been challenged before. And there were encouraging precedents: "Our union was very, very powerful," said Valerie Miner, an American writer who had lived in England for several years and been active in the National Union of Journalists there. "Once you get rid of the notion that it's a privilege

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to get published, you see things very differently."

By the Sunday-night plenary session, excitement over the proposed union was in the air; it was the second resolution to be voted on, and the main ballroom was packed. So partisan was the crowd that it was impossible to find three speakers against the resolution, and the two who did volunteer scarcely dared voice their opposition among that bristling throng. "Like, what would happen if you got decertified by the union?" stammered a timid young man who looked as if he had spent the past decade in Haight-Ashbury. The audience hooted and groaned. "We have a closed shop right now," answered a pro-union speaker, to great applause. "The publishers have closed it." And when Madelon Bedell called for "an old-fashioned trade union in the great American tradition," there was pandemonium. The vote was called, and a forest of hands arose in favor; perhaps twenty voted against. As the moderator, June Jordan, decreed that the resolution had passed, people were suddenly singing "Solidarity Forever" and yelling "Strike! Strike! Strike!" A ridiculous scene, no doubt—after all, who were we supposed to strike against, and for what?—but it was hard to ignore the *frisson* produced.

That was the high moment. Thirty resolutions remained to be voted on (any resolution that received a hundred signatures could be put before the congress), and an ever-dwindling audience found itself discussing "lesbian and gay rights," "support of the Socialist Workers Party," and even solidarity with the air-traffic controllers. No provision had been made for a quorum, and by nine o'clock, Imamu Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) was urging the remaining 200 people to vote in favor of a resolution calling for military aid to black South African revolutionists. (It passed.)

Out on Madison Avenue, deserted at this hour on a Sunday night, I was looking for a cab when a limousine pulled up. "Where you going?" demanded the driver, rolling down a tinted window. "I'll take you for seven dollars," he said. "C'mon. A cab'll cost you five." I was about to get in, but the thought of my brothers and sisters of the pen struggling against racism, imperialism, and fascism in every corner of the world made me hesitate, and I reluctantly waved him on. After all, I was a worker now. □

BOOKS

THE LEGACY OF MODERNISM

BY GERALD GRAFF

ALL THAT IS SOLID MELTS INTO AIR: The Experience of Modernity
by Marshall Berman
Simon and Schuster, \$17.50.



"ALL THAT IS SOLID melts into air." This haunting statement, which provides the title and theme of Marshall Berman's new book, could easily appear in a classic philosophical poem. As it happens, the statement is in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, and refers not to the natural impermanence of earthly things but to a condition peculiar to modernity. The bourgeois class, Marx declares, "wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors,' and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.' It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation." The effect is an "uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions," an "everlasting uncertainty and agitation" that "distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."

You don't have to be a Marxist to be moved by the complex poetry of this passage. There is, to be sure, a certain anticipation of trite *New Masses* rhetoric ("self-interest" is always "naked," "cash payment" always "callous"), but the passage as a whole, as Berman points out, communicates both excite-

ment and pathos at the historical changes it describes. Marx becomes so carried away that, in the *Manifesto*, he actually praises the bourgeoisie—praises it, as Berman rightly says, "more powerfully and profoundly than its members have ever known how to praise themselves," giving us "a lyrical celebration of bourgeois works, ideas, and achievements." At the same time, Marx soberly describes the price paid in suffering and dislocation for these achievements, in "everlasting uncertainty" arising from the destruction of those relations, bonds, and pieties that had afforded pre-capitalist societies a measure of protection against the terrors of life. "The remarkable abundance of possibilities" afforded by modern life is founded on a permanent, built-in insecurity, Marx argued; and in describing this paradox, Berman contends, he hit upon something peculiar to "the experience of modernity." "To be modern," Berman writes, "is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are."

All That Is Solid Melts Into Air is the latest in a growing number of efforts to reassess the elusive legacy of "modernism." One thinks of such works as Harold Rosenberg's *Tradition of the New*, Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man*, and Daniel Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. If anything, Berman's scope is even wider than that of his predecessors, ranging from the modernism of art and literature to the modernism of money, city planning, automobiles, architecture, and transportation. He wants to close the gap between literary-critical studies of modern art and social-scientific studies of "modernization." His sensible assumption is that cultural phenomena can't be understood very well if treated as isolated fragments. He has read impressively in the relevant fields, and what he says is frequently thoughtful and sometimes original. The ultimate point of the book, however, is difficult to grasp. He wants both to explain the nature of modernism in its various manifestations and to promote it as a prescription for a disoriented society. But, like most physicians' prescriptions, this one isn't completely intelligible.

Gerald Graff is professor of English at Northwestern University and is the author of *Literature Against Itself*.

BERMAN STARTS OFF with a chapter on Goethe's *Faust*, which he interprets as an ironic parable of "development." By this word, Berman means not only property development but also self-development, the quest for personal growth. The irony of *Faust* is that "once this developer has destroyed the pre-modern world, he has destroyed his whole reason for being in the world. In a totally modern society, the tragedy of modernization—including its tragic hero—comes naturally to an end. Once the developer has cleared all the obstacles away, he himself is in the way." There follows a chapter on Marx, whom Berman wants to rescue from his reputation as a dry economist by rereading him as a modern poet whose figurative



extravagance undermines his political convictions. Berman thus asks why, if the "melting" forces set in motion by modernity are as subversive as Marx's metaphors imply, Marx should have thought that a proletarian revolution could get them under control.

It's a good question, but Berman carries the point a bit too far. His reading of *The Communist Manifesto* as "the archetype of a century of modernist manifestoes and movements to come" is scintillating but dubious. The Marxian sentence that stated that all that is solid melts into air concludes with a reference to something that doesn't melt, the "real conditions of life" that man must confront "with sober senses." Marx assumed that one had to understand these real conditions before one could change them, a view more characteristic of real-

istic novelists than of modernist poets. Still, Berman is provocative on the convergences between Marx and Baudelaire, whose poems are discussed—with the aid of Walter Benjamin's work—as dramatizations of the urban heroism and chaos Marx theorized about. Berman's chapter on Baudelaire includes an interesting account of Baron Georges Eugène Haussmann's construction of the Parisian boulevards, a project that destroyed the city's traditional social fabric and made possible Baudelaire's main subject: the curious mixture of intimacy and estrangement to be found on the crowded urban street. Here again it's clear that for Berman "modernism" is not only a property of certain works of art but a way of life, a pervasive turbulence that enters into environment, behavior, and feeling.

In the second half of the book, Berman moves from the Paris boulevards to the Nevsky Prospect of St. Petersburg, the setting of much literature from Pushkin to Dostoyevsky to Osip Mandelstam. A great deal of this material is fascinating in itself—particularly where Berman shows how the encounter on the street between figures from opposing classes runs through the entire tradition of St. Petersburg writing. But the chapter goes on too long and seems a digression from Berman's main themes. More pertinent to these themes is the concluding chapter, which deals with New York City's Robert Moses, whom Berman calls the "Captain Ahab" of modern urban redevelopment. After mentioning with undisguised bitterness that Moses's Cross-Bronx Expressway wiped out his own pleasant middle-class neighborhood, Berman goes on to show grudging admiration for Moses's accomplishments. Ruthless though figures like Moses may be in using cities and their inhabitants as so much inert material (Berman quotes a statement by Moses that "when you operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax"), Berman thinks we have no right to condemn them. For the spirit of total mobility they embody is merely the same spirit we harbor in ourselves. Berman wonders how many people would still be in the Bronx today, "caring for it and fighting for it," if Moses had left it alone. "Some of us, no doubt, but I suspect not so many, and in any case—it hurts to say it—not me. For the Bronx of my youth was possessed, inspired, by

the great modern dream of mobility."

Perhaps the most controversial implication of Berman's argument is the similarity he proposes between modern art and the commercial society it so often professes to disdain. Berman argues that literary nihilism is as much a mirror image of the non-values of the market as a protest against them. Again, Marx was prophetic, having, in Berman's words, unveiled "the modern bourgeois as consummate nihilists on a far vaster scale than modern intellectuals can conceive." Berman clinches the point by observing that "the drug-crazed nihilism of William Burroughs, a favorite *bête noir* in antimodernist polemics, is a pale reproduction of his ancestral trust, whose profits financed his avant-garde career:



the Burroughs Adding Machine Company, now Burroughs International, sober nihilists of the bottom line."

This last point, however, poses some problems for Berman's thesis. For if modern art is an echo of the society it opposes, then why does Berman invest so much confidence in that art as a corrective to the modern predicament? Berman faults conservative writers of "anti-modernist polemics" (Daniel Bell in particular) for denouncing literary nihilism while ignoring the embarrassing nihilism of commerce. But Berman's own pro-modernist polemic is equally embarrassed by the similarity: if William Burroughs and Burroughs International are merely two sides of the same nihilist currency, why should the one be a plausible antidote to the other? Perhaps Burroughs doesn't qualify as a real "modern-

ist." Berman distinguishes between the classic modernism of Baudelaire, Eliot, and the Cubists, and the thin, bland, socially apathetic art that has come to be called "post modern," the art of Warhol and Cage. But even allowing for this distinction, the difficulty remains.

It remains because Berman nowhere really justifies his argument that classic modernist art not only illustrates our cultural dilemmas but also points the way out of them. He asserts at the outset that "the argument of this book is that, in fact, the modernisms of the past can give us back a sense of our own modern roots, roots that go back two hundred years." He credits modern artworks with "showing modern men how they can hold themselves together in the midst of a sea of futility and absurdity that threatens to engulf their cities and their minds." He praises Rafael Ferrer's steel sculpture "Puerto Rican Sun" (though Berman's description makes it sound suspiciously post-modern to me), claiming that "it may be helping people who are going through a crucial, excruciating passage in their history—and in ours—get a grip on where they are going and who they are." Fine, but where *are* they going and who *are* they? It is in these and other such passages that Berman loses me. They make him sound like a finger-snapping Matthew Arnold, improbably replacing that critic's Dante and Shakespeare with Rimbaud and Nietzsche as our antidotes to Anarchy. At times, the word "modernism" loses all precision, becoming more vague even than Arnold's "sweetness and light"—a phrase that at least remotely denoted an edifying quality possessed by all the works Arnold would have admitted into his tradition of "culture." If there's any comparable corrective quality common to works that Berman would classify as modernist, he doesn't define it. So it's not surprising that when he tries to justify his claim that we can be given back "a sense of our own modern roots" by "the modernisms of the past," his prose takes a nose dive.

Having to generalize about modernism is enough to ruin anybody's prose, but the trouble is magnified when one attempts to convert modernism into a culture-philosophy. One can, by cutting and pasting, put together such a culture-philosophy, but one is then faced with new dilemmas. Berman doesn't confront the problems posed by the totalitarian social ideas of such high modernists as

Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Hulme, D. H. Lawrence, and Céline. When these figures did endorse a program, it left something to be desired if you didn't happen to be an aristocrat or a primitive. Perhaps after we factor out this authoritarian element we are still left with valuable social criticism from the modernists. But dropping them all on our porch in one big bag doesn't take us far.

Berman might have gone further had he distinguished what he calls "social and political forces" from the psychological, spiritual, and "existential" problems of modernity. It's one thing, a useful thing, to relate politics to religion, psychoanalysis, and metaphysics; it's another to confuse them. The confusion is frequent in Surrealism, Dada, and other apocalyptic forms of modernism, whence Berman evidently contracted it. Without arguing for a complete separation of realms, one can suggest that if what Berman calls the "futility and absurdity" that threaten to engulf modern man are to be addressed, it may be needful to distinguish between "futility," some forms of which may be remediable, and "absurdity," for which there is no known cure. As long as curing inequality is linked with curing the sense of the absurd, this goal becomes not merely utopian but inconceivable.

Berman evidently continues to subscribe to what, in the title of his first book, he called *The Politics of Authenticity*. If you read the new book in the light of the earlier one, you begin to suspect that what Berman means by "modernism" is what he earlier called "the politics of authenticity," and that behind the blurry rhetoric about modernism as a means of getting a grip on where we are going and who we are lies the therapeutic politics of the counterculture. (Berman's vocabulary may be a giveaway, with its frequent reliance on "meaningful," "trip," "drag," "inner space," "weird," and the ever-popular "relate to": e.g., "Faust could relate to Christianity . . .") The phrase "politics of authenticity" reappears only once in the new book, but at a pivotal spot near the end, where Berman at least faintly echoes the revolutionary hopes declared at the conclusion of his first book. There Berman wrote that "one of the most important things for radical critics to point to is all the powerful feeling which the system tries to repress—in particular, every man's sense of his own unique, irreducible self. But we cannot evoke this

feeling in other people unless we are in touch with it in ourselves. It is with ourselves, then, that the politics of authenticity must begin." There is an obvious problem here, which the politics of authenticity in practice never overcame: if you make politics hinge on personal authenticity, you may have to defer politics indefinitely. If efforts at social betterment have to wait until we "get in touch with our feelings"—whatever that means—they are in for a long wait.

What makes Berman's new book an advance over his previous one is that he has rid himself of the delusion that we live under a tradition-bound "system" that must "repress" the "unique, irreducible self." This misunderstanding, as much as anything else, contributed to the demise of the Left, whose attacks on inhibitions and restraints were really more applicable to Victorian society than to the twentieth-century United States. The Moral Majority has lately revived this misunderstanding, promoting the same fiction of a puritanical, "traditional" America as the one from which the counterculture derived its strategies of psychic liberation. But behind Berman's generalities about modernism, if I read the signs correctly, we find a restatement, however chastened and muted, of countercultural politics. Perhaps this explains Berman's unwillingness to draw the conclusions to which his material points: that the politics of authenticity is neither much of a politics nor especially authentic; that insofar as one can generalize, modernist art is as much a symptom as a corrective of the dilemmas of modernity. □

SHORT REVIEWS



HERMIONE by H. D. *New Directions*, \$15.00. Although called a novel, this work by the late poet Hilda Doolittle is really autobiography with aliases. It poignantly describes the bewildered resentment of a young woman unable and unwilling to do the things expected of her by her parents and her social group. "Her" (as she thinks of herself) is in fact suffering something close to a nervous breakdown, for which she gets no sympathy, because she manages to

maintain a mask of correct, if slightly acid, good manners. Years later, when Doolittle wrote the story, she had come to understand that much of what she felt at the time was irrational, but she reported those old emotions with an honesty that made the book unpublishable while any of the victims still lived. Since Her's cocky, baffled fiancé is instantly recognizable as Ezra Pound, the other characters would surely have been recognizable in their Philadelphia circle. All those earnest damsels, interminably drinking tea (with the little finger carefully extended—or was that H. D.'s malicious invention?) while discussing what to "take up" next (a real job was unthinkable) had meant the author no harm. They did not deserve her hatred and contempt, and she knew it. So the book appears now, fifty or more years late, but still fascinating as a revelation of people, time, and place seen through an exacerbated sensibility that worked on reality like a fun-house mirror.

THE RANDOM HOUSE LIBRARY OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, *David Piper, general editor. Random House, \$85.00 through 12/31/81, \$100.00 thereafter.* Volume I, *Understanding Art*, covers themes, techniques, and methods. Volumes II and III are devoted to the history of art from the Stone Age to the present. Volume IV contains a dictionary of artists and art terms. The illustrations are generous and largely in color. The text, by appropriate experts, espouses no particular school, cause, or philosophy. A project such as this resembles an anthology—it is always possible to complain that one's pet artist or favorite period has been scanted or, in this case, that a certain color plate is not quite right. As a whole, however, and considering the stretch of time and variety of work covered, these books are a sound and useful library, neatly condensed into their box.

TOO MANY SONGS BY TOM LEHRER WITH NOT ENOUGH DRAWINGS BY RONALD SEARLE *by Tom Lehrer, illustrated by Ronald Searle. Pantheon, \$16.50; \$8.95 paper.* Mr. Lehrer's wickedly satirical lyrics and spoofing tunes are probably as dangerous as Gilbert and Sullivan on amateur tongues, but let the neighbors plug their ears. The stuff is wonderful fun. The piano settings, by Mr. Lehrer and Frank Metis, are readily playable.

ART OF THE HOLOCAUST *by Janet Blatter and Sybil Milton. Rutledge Press, \$29.95.* In spite of the restrictions and privations of Nazi prison camps, artists both professional and amateur managed to do an amazing amount of work there, an amazing amount of which survived even when the artists perished. The pictures assembled by Ms. Blatter and Ms. Milton are a pitiful, terrifying record of an appalling time. The book includes a helpful text and an index of the artists, some known only by a name on a drawing.

OUT OF THE PAST *by Alexandra Tolstoy, edited by Katharine Strelsky and Catherine Wolkonsky. Columbia, \$19.95.* Alexandra Tolstoy served as a front-line nurse in World War I, and after the Revolution spent several years at Yasnaya Polyana, trying to maintain her father's principles against Bolshevik "atheistic materialism." By 1929 she realized that the fight was hopeless and fled to Japan, where she spent two years before coming to the United States. In this country she lectured; warned against Soviet policy, although few listened; wrote about her father; and established the Tolstoy Foundation for the assistance of Russian refugees throughout the world. She was always short of money and often scared, but never lost her nerve or her will to do good. Her memoirs, translated by "various hands," include some material on Leo Tolstoy that has appeared elsewhere, but that is a small part of the record of a brave woman with a sharply observant eye, immense energy, and a nice dry humor.

FUNERAL GAMES *by Mary Renault. Pantheon, \$14.50.* Reportedly, Alexander the Great foresaw, on his deathbed, "great contests at my funeral games." The game Ms. Renault describes in the last of her Alexander novels is the self-destruction of the Macedonian royal family. Without Alexander's control, his tribe made the House of Atreus look, by comparison, like gentle humanitarians. The novel is beautifully written, solidly convincing, and unrelievedly grim. It is also absorbing. The question of who will be murdered next is irresistible reader bait.

THE MISMEASURE OF MAN *by Stephen Jay Gould. Norton, \$14.95.* Although intelligence, as a separate quality, has never been satisfactorily defined, at-

January report on

ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS BOOKS

KAREN KVASHAY



Elsewhere in this issue you will find a rerun of Gogol's "The Overcoat" by a dashing young writer with the moniker of T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE. Some *Atlantic* readers will recall meeting him before, in these pages or in other magazines. His work has won him the coveted St. Lawrence Fiction Award, the Aga Khan Award, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Sounds formidable, eh? *Literary.* But in truth this is a work by one of the most amusing, vivid, entertaining storytellers to come along in many a year. "In narrative invention," writes William Gass, "interest of character, in richness of detail, in wit, inviting sensuality, and above all in the unabashed and astounding vitality of its prose, **WATER MUSIC** will be difficult to equal."

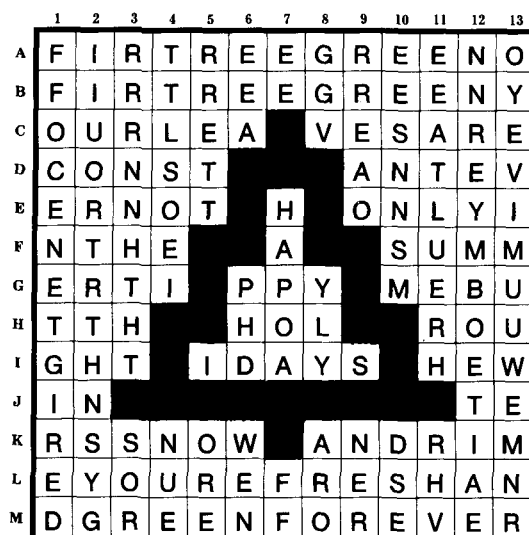
WATER MUSIC is a novel about the life of Mungo Park, the man who explored the headwaters of the Niger River in Africa between 1795 and 1805—a story to bring a blush to the cheek of Sir Walter Scott. "If anything, this reads like a 20th century Dickens novel. It is wild and astonishing," says *Publishers Weekly*. Boyle takes us back to the delights of Victorian fiction. *But for adults only.*

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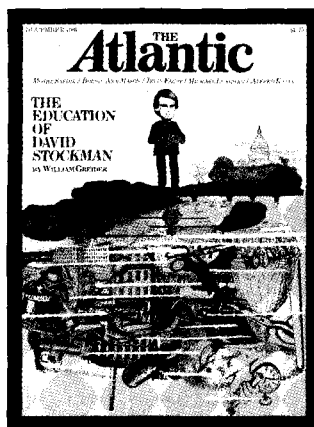
WHILE THEY LAST

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tempts to measure it scientifically began in the early nineteenth century and continue to the present. Mr. Gould's well-written history of intelligence testing reveals some wonderfully zany methods and some shamelessly dishonest practitioners, along with the fact that every such test ever devised has proved the superior intelligence of the tester's own race and class. The tale would be funny if one could overlook the misery that such tests have inflicted on generations of defenseless schoolchildren.

KING OF THE CONFESSORS by Thomas Hoving. Simon and Schuster, \$16.95. As a young assistant curator at The Cloisters, Mr. Hoving was half assigned, half allowed, to attempt the purchase of an ivory cross that was either a superb work of medieval art or a positively dazzling piece of fakery. His account of the affair contains too much of his own jittery meditations on that question, but if these are skipped, the story is an instructive excursion into the murky inferno of art dealing. Mr. Hoving is not a notably likable guide, for he reveals himself as sly, savagely ambitious, and disobedient to his orders, but, given the devious types with whom he had to deal, those qualities were probably necessary for success. His love of art and devotion to scholarship are undoubtedly genuine and become appealing.

MAN AS ART: NEW GUINEA, photographs by Malcolm Kirk, introduction by Andrew Strathern. Viking, \$45.00. The men, and sometimes the women, of New Guinea paint their faces in splendid colors and festoon their bodies—also painted—with shell plates, beads by the bushel, grass skirts, human hair, mesh draperies, tufts of fur, smears of mud, and clumps of vegetation. All this is as nothing compared to their hats, which, thanks to the indigenous birds of paradise, are miracles of glittering ingenuity. The whole elaborate regalia is, of course, for ritual purposes, which Mr. Strathern discusses with much sober anthropological terminology. The non-anthropologist can simply enjoy the riot of what Mr. Kirk rightly calls "fabulous images."

THE COMPUTER ESTABLISHMENT by Katharine Davis Fishman. Harper & Row, \$20.95. Portions of this book originally appeared in *The Atlantic*.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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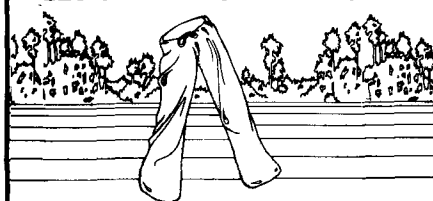
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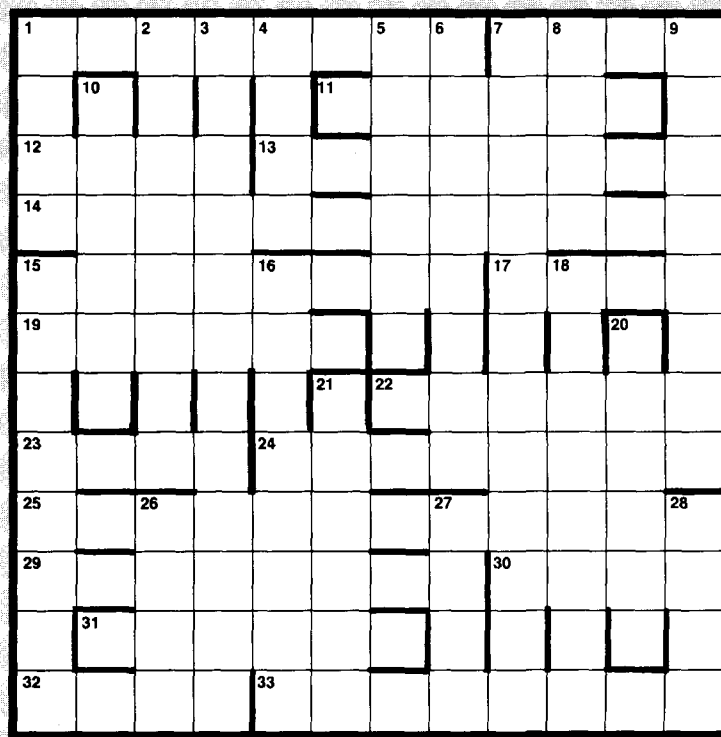
THE ATLANTIC PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

BACKFIELD IN MOTION

Answers to clues are fullbacks (entered entirely in reverse), halfbacks (first or second half entered in reverse), or quarterbacks (one-fourth entered in reverse). For example, the word GOALPOST should be entered TSOPLAOG if it is a fullback; LAOGPOST or GOALTSOP if it is a halfback; and OGALPOST, GOLAPOST, GOALOPST, or GOALPOTS if it is a quarterback. There are 18 halfbacks, 9 fullbacks, and 9 quarterbacks. Two answers are proper nouns (one of them a trademark). Punctuation may be used deceptively.

*The solution to last month's
Puzzler appears on page 88.*



ACROSS

1. Running back moving if I set signals (8)
7. Jet, Colt, and others tossed out with a jerk (4)
11. Scrambled left over slippery surface (6)
12. Get beaten in Buffalo, severely (4)
13. Chiefs' second half changed score, with great revelry (8)
14. Team member has to work at penetrating to become a Redskin? (12)
15. Atlanta's center moved nimbly around #5 and gained ground (8)
17. Sound of a Ram making contact (4)
19. Just over a yard outside end of Miami field (6)
22. Men lay clobbered viciously (6)
23. Packer's product of disorganized team (4)
24. Inform a Lion, "Moving is sensible" (8)
25. Trouble—Rice TD possibly out of

bounds? (12)

29. Best built for running, break outside—gain ground (8)
30. Back catches with arm (4)
31. Receivers streak off (6)
32. Tots notice Bradshaw's middle (4)
33. Brutal action put cheer into Coach Lombardi (8)

DOWN

1. Cardinal coaches holding back crowd (4)
2. Broadcast shows ball-holder grabbing pants (8)
3. At home, Giants invading Saints' sections (12)
4. Pad uniform (4)
5. Rocky piles caused by protector changing direction at the last (6)
6. Pass-receiver gets in proposal for rule-breaker (8)
7. Someone on the sidelines floating

passes around mid-zone—look closely (12)

8. Jar Chicago's end thoroughly from behind (4)
9. With great cheer, Simpson comes up with lousy, no-good yard (8)
10. Loudly disapprove touchdown with point kicked (6)
15. Delighted, put Raider out after one gets away (8)
16. Mocking Viking almost caught by desperate dives (8)
18. Up 10-0, intercepted by young lady coming out wearing head protection (8)
20. What a Buccaneer does at times about Steeler goals (6)
21. A tackle's first to wear out uniform (6)
26. Former collegian guard converted after leaving university (4)
27. Prepare the field and a place for receipts (4)
28. One college All-Star team in the Astrodome (4)

Note: The instructions above are the special instructions for this month's puzzle. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, write to The Atlantic Reprint Department, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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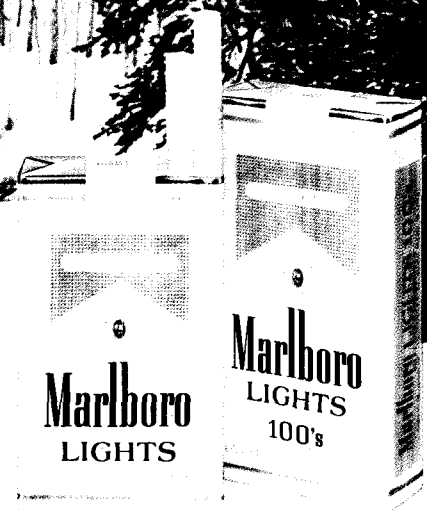
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